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Tributary Technologies takes users off webcams and into the world

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania- November 19, 2008 – Picturing a tech entrepreneur, many people might imagine a college student creating program codes in her parents' basement, or perhaps a young Bill Gates who leaves college and become one of the richest people in America. What people might not expect is a nurse and lawyer detailing their innovative camcorder accessory that would allow for live video from the sidelines of a football game or the front row of a wedding.

Tom and Jean Matvey of Aliquippa, PA, are not only working professionals with more ten years' experience in their fields, but also the creative minds behind Tributary Technologies, LLC. Tom Matvey is a successful lawyer with his own firm and a background in accounting and computers. Jean Matvey is a nurse who also works in non-profit through the Pennsylvania Great Dane Rescue. And surprisingly, according to the Kauffman Foundation of Entrepreneurship, these are just the type of people who become successful tech entrepreneurs. Tech founders are typically older than 25 with professional degrees in diverse fields. The Matveys easily fit this description.

Tributary Technologies offers a system that will connect a camcorder directly to the Internet to allow live streaming of images to a computer. The camera will connect directly to the Net through WiFi in the area or through a mobile broadband card. Once connected, the user can show live video on a personalized Tributary Technologies Web site to a private or general audience.

When asked where the idea came from, Tom replied, "If I'm playing with something, I often think, 'Wouldn't it be cool if I could do this with it?'" Tom's children are involved in softball and color guard while the family as a whole enjoys traveling. Tom thought it would be great to share their games and vacations with far away family members while taping in real time.

In order to pursue this idea, the Matveys hired a patent attorney, drew up their plans and headed off to Las Vegas for the Consumer Electronics Show. "We went there to pitch our product and see who was interested," Jean explained, "but we started developing so many ideas just listening to what people are interested in." One thing they learned was that people are not interested in just an idea; they needed to find engineers and funding to create a finished product.

This is how the Matveys came across PantherlabWorks, a division of the Institute for Entrepreneurial Excellence at the University of Pittsburgh that works with technological entrepreneurs to bring their innovative ideas to market. Before PantherlabWorks' help, they had no idea how to move their idea forward, write a business plan or identify best markets.

With PantherlabWorks' help, they have since developed a business plan, connected with funding opportunities and contacted companies interested in developing and licensing the product. They are also working with a University of Pittsburgh College of Business Administration marketing research class that is developing focus groups to survey campuses for young people's interest in applications for technology. In addition, an online survey will gauge interest levels in various applications among older audiences.

"We learned a lot about what funders want to see when you're applying for funding. I won't think we're really somewhere until we have a working product, and that's what PantherlabWorks is helping us move toward," Tom said. "Each step we've taken with them has improved our approach to it."

“Mike Lehman [director of PantherlabWorks] has helped us tremendously by guiding us towards a better business plan,” Jean added.

PantherlabWorks and student intern Sahin Danis, a first-year MBA with an engineering background, are helping them investigate competing technologies, too. While the Matveys had considered Wi-Fi and broadband connection for the camera from the start, they have recently entertained the idea of satellite connection to allow for an even larger network. For example, in Iraq, if someone were in a place without First Responders, they could use the technology to broadcast an event immediately. Or if a soldier’s daughter were graduating kindergarten, he could watch the event in real time despite being overseas.

The possibilities for what users could do with this technology are endless, and that is part of the Matveys’ excitement about what they have created. “Give people technology and they will go all over the place with it. We are anxious to see where this goes, especially with young people,” Tom said. “You can see people are doing things more and more on a live broadcast. Right now, if people want to broadcast live, they’re tethered to their computers. We are offering the opportunity to do things live and mobile at the same time.”

The site will also offer storage of files as they’re being recorded and broadcast. Users can store a file on the site, share it, or print the broadcast on a CD. With this option, a new bride could not only stream her wedding online for guests not in attendance, but send her guests home with a copy as well. Personalized use allows users to focus on what matters to them.

The Matveys also credit their diverse experiences for their compatibility and successful partnership. Tom is from Braddock Hills and Jean is from Swissvale. The two dated in high school, then met again 7 or 8 years ago. Both share an entrepreneurial spirit and for Tom, a long lasting love for technology. Tom first worked with computers in 1983 and assisted with computer systems during his time as a corporate accountant until 1991. He then entered the University of Pittsburgh Law School and continues to work extensively with computers to this day.

“I’ve always maintained a personal and professional interest in technology,” Tom states. He now hopes to share his interests with the world through Tributary Technologies, LLC. Although Tom will always enjoy his career as a lawyer, he is also looking to expand his professional experiences. “I’m not going to define myself by, “This is what I am and this is what I’ll always be.””

Tom sees himself as a lawyer, accountant, father and technological enthusiast all rolled into one. Jean may also be described as a nurse, world traveler, philanthropist and supportive team member of Tributary Technologies. They complement each other well and hope to use this to drive their company toward success. “We have the same idea and believe in the product, but based on our backgrounds and interests, we have different ideas about how to use it,” Jean explained.

“I have great confidence in this idea,” Tom added. “It can make an enormous change in so many ways. The ability to share events with family, the ability to see things as they’re happening in other countries – it has the ability to change the way people see things and to help them see what they otherwise wouldn’t see. It lets them see things in a different light, where there is no media bias and it’s not being used as propaganda.”

The Matveys will continue working with PantherlabWorks to see their idea jump off the page and into the hands and memories of recording enthusiasts.

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The Institute for Entrepreneurial Excellence (IEE) at the University of Pittsburgh’s Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business helps businesses grow and prosper in all stages of their lifecycle. From conceiving an idea to creating a legacy for future generations, the IEE provides education, advice, and services to entrepreneurs through PantherlabWorks, Agricultural Entrepreneurship Program, Small Business Development Center, Entrepreneurial Fellows Center, and Family Enterprise Center.

Our mission is to be the innovative leader of economic renewal and growth serving enterprising people and businesses in the Region.

