

CAREER & EDUCATION



Ashwin Sah of Stoller Middle School in Portland, and Andrew Bai, Akshay Pulavarty, and Raghav Prakash, all of Meadow Park Middle School in Beaverton, represent Oregon in the Raytheon Math Counts national competition. The coach is Jin Yang of Stoller Middle School.

Achieving in Math Counts

Ashwin Sah of Stoller Middle School in Portland was awarded the second-place individual title in the Raytheon Math Counts

national competition at Walt Disney World in Lake Buena Vista.

Sah won a \$6,000 scholarship in last

month's competition, which included more than 200 other high-achieving middle school students from around the country.

A state competition was held to pick the Oregon competitors, a four-member team which placed 14th nationally. Besides Sah, the students were Andrew Bai, Akshay Pulavarty and Raghav Prakash of Meadow Park Middle School in Beaverton. The coach was Jin Yang of Stoller Middle School.

Cascade Connections

BY ALGIE C. GATEWOOD



It is, indeed, the 21st Century. Different aspects of the emerging global economy can be seen everywhere. When I had some trouble with my computer recently, I didn't take it down the street to a repair shop the way I might have a broken toaster 20 years ago. And heaven knows, I didn't try to fix it myself. Instead, I spent about two hours on the phone with "Tech Support."

But I didn't spend my time talking with someone from Portland or Seattle or Chicago or Houston. The man who helped me, quite skillfully, was from India. He was an employee of the company whose software I was struggling with – an American company – but he worked in India.

Being a collegial sort of person, I didn't just talk shop with this young man – I started a conversation. As we worked on my software problems, I learned that this skilled, articulate professional held a bachelor's degree. He helped struggling Americans and Britons and Canadians with their software troubles for the princely sum of \$20 per day – and he was happy to get it.

As most people know, the scenario of talking to a tech support

person based in India or Pakistan or some other far-flung locale is practically a cliché. It's just the way the world works these days. Multinational corporations have realized for some time now that emerging nations have a wealth of well-educated, talented people who are willing to do things like tech support at a fraction of the wage that an American would demand.

This begs a number of pertinent questions: Are large corporations greedy for seeking out labor forces on the other side of the globe who are willing to work for far less money than Americans? Do Americans – and other Westerners for that matter – have a sense of wage entitlement that just doesn't square with the global economy anymore?

While these issues are worth exploring, they pale beside the more important, overarching question: How do we here in America compete in this new economy, and how do we avoid losing more and more skilled jobs to citizens of other nations?

There is no easy answer, I am afraid, but I can tell you where we

Jobs in the New Economy

begin: with education.

If we, as a society, make it a priority to produce the best-educated, best-trained, most versatile work force we can, then we can continue to be competitive in the global economy. This is not a complete solution to the problem of job out-sourcing, but it is something we can do now, with the resources and infrastructure we already have on hand. And the best place to start is at your local community college.

Today's community colleges

are ground zero for obtaining the skills necessary to find gainful employment in today's hyperspecialized, technology-driven workplace. A whole range of two-year degrees and professional certifications can be earned at community college, which allow people to function productively and intelligently in a job market that is already far more complex than it was just a few years ago. And of course, community college is a low-cost gateway to earning a four-year degree

and beyond.

My computer works just fine now, thanks to the young man from India. I was happy to talk with him and learn a little bit about his life. As I hung up the phone, however, I couldn't help imagining a world in which I could take my computer down the street to a repair shop – and have it fixed by someone who studied at the community college in his or her neighborhood.

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