



INFO - BITES

The Online Newsletter from Byte Back | November, 2011

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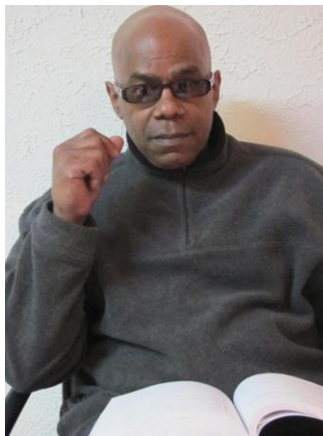
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Student Spotlight: Certification Improves Employability



One of Byte Back's several advanced certification courses, the A+ computer hardware certification course, helps students compete in today's job market by teaching them the skills needed for growth industry jobs. Last month, as Byte Back expanded into a second building in Washington, D.C.'s Brookland neighborhood, several of our A+ certification graduates, including Ronald Wade, were instrumental in setting up the computer networks in our new office space.

Wade, who obtained his A+ certification in February 2011, and his Net+ certification in October, is currently studying at Byte Back to obtain his Security+ certification. Although taking the A+ certification course was his first experience at Byte Back, his story has been one of improving his employability through study and certification. A former mechanic who found it difficult to continue in a line of physical work after a back injury, Wade obtained a bachelor's degree in computer science from the University of the District of Columbia in 2009.

Yet entering the computer industry without information technology certification proved to be difficult, encouraging Wade to register for Byte Back's A+ certification course in early 2011. "I wanted to increase my employability, and so Byte Back was the perfect fit," said Wade.

Wade describes the hardest part of his first certification course as "staying focused" in the classroom, where A+ certification students must master both the essentials of computer hardware and efficient troubleshooting of computer technology. Over two months, for nine hours each week, Wade "showed up every day and applied [himself] as a student" to learn the material for the A+ certification exam.

What separates the classroom at Byte Back from the classroom at a university, according to him, is the degree of attention and communication. Doing more than teaching from textbooks and instruction manuals, Wade's teacher provided students with supplemental learning materials, so that they could understand computer technology from multiple perspectives.

"When they ask you a question on the exam, you have to know the answer to the question," said Wade. "When you use multiple sources, you know the material no matter how the question is being asked."

As a former college student, Wade also saw major differences between a university's teaching structure and Byte Back's.

"A university's primary concern is economic: You have a classroom size and a limited time frame, so the relationship with your instructor is somewhat limited. But in the framework of Byte Back, you have more time, and you get more one-on-one communication with the instructor. He can give you a large time frame to get the information that you're seeking from him."

In September, Byte Back also presented a unique opportunity to Wade, where he was asked to bring his expertise to help set up the computer networks for Byte Back's new office space. Wade and two other A+ certification graduates worked with an engineer to not only create a secure computer system for Byte's Back's employees, but also use their knowledge to arrange the system in an "aesthetic, inconspicuous, and safe manner."

Since obtaining his A+ certification in February, Wade's experience has only progressed and developed, with his recent attainment of Net+ certification, as well as his current studies to become certified in Security+. All of these computer certifications are ways for Wade to improve his employability in the information technology industry, and they are all interrelated as well. With more certifications, Wade is better able to demonstrate his expertise in computer technology to a potential employer.

"With Net+ you set up computer systems, and with Security+ you use A+ and Net+ material to secure information systems and safeguard a network," explained Wade. "Everything is interrelated from A+, to Net+ to Security+. You want to be able to understand the network in its totality."

Wade's journey, from working as a mechanic, to obtaining a bachelor's degree in computer science, to obtaining certifications through Byte Back has been one of "commitment" and "endless hours of study" -- but such is his love for technology, as well as his dedication to improving his skills. At the Byte Back Gala on November 19, Wade will be presented with the 2011 Golden Mouse Award as the Student/Volunteer of the Year. This award will be given in recognition of Wade's dedication to his studies and to the mission of Byte Back.

"It's very seldom that you come across an organization -- not just instructors, but staff and volunteers -- that is serious about inspiring individuals," he said. "When we came in here to accomplish some objectives, everything in the instruction helped us do that."



This Saturday on November 19, Byte Back will be hosting its first-ever fundraiser gala event for its volunteers, donors, and guests. With the kind support of the Panté Technology Corporation, we'll be celebrating the successes of the hundreds of Byte Back graduates who have reinvented themselves by bravely facing their fears, learning new skills and reaching for new job opportunities.

The evening will include an awards ceremony to honor those individuals and partners which have advanced the mission of Byte Back.. Our 2011 Golden Mouse Awards will go to:

- **Ronald Wade** and **Germaine Holt** as Student/Volunteer of the Year
- **Chris Tonjes** as Government Partner of the Year
- The **Federal Communications Bar Association** as Corporate Partner of the Year
- **First Time Computers** at Nonprofit Partner of the Year
- **Bob Wittig** of the Jovid Foundation as Funding Partner of the Year

The event will also include a premier-select silent auction, featuring rare wine, getaways to Martha's Vineyard and Sonoma wine country, jewelry, collectibles and restaurant gift certificates. It will take place at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel, ranked by *Institutional Investor* magazine as one of the top 100 hotels in the world. Guests will enjoy live jazz and R& B as they dine on Chinese and Italian fare, followed by dancing. All proceeds from this event will go toward Byte Back operations.

If you'd like to support Byte Back's efforts to bridge the digital divide, please buy a ticket to the "It's Never Too Late" gala, or become a Byte Back sponsor. Tickets cost \$50 per person.

Our event would not be possible without the support of the Panté Technology Corporation. The Panté Technology Corporation is a San Antonio, Texas based computer technology firm specializing in Information Technology products, services and enterprise-wide integrated IT solutions for higher education, Federal, state and local government customers worldwide.

Volunteer Spotlight: Byte Back's Service Corps Members

This year Byte Back has been blessed with twelve full-time AmeriCorps volunteers from Serve DC, Public Allies and DC Learns. They have been with us for just over two months of their service year and it is remarkable how deeply -- and diversely -- they are in involving themselves in our effort to bridge the digital divide in the Washington, D.C. community.

In addition to teaching, each has taken on special projects such as creating new curriculum, helping to customize our new database, and creating instructional videos. Each brings different experiences and interests to Byte Back. Here, they speak in their own words.



*Nicholas Osmanski,
volunteer instructor*

"I am from South Carolina, but have lived in a few different countries during the course of my life. I graduated from the College of Wooster in 2009 with Bachelor's degree in anthropology. During my first year after college I worked in Columbia, South Carolina as an assistant therapist at the South Carolina Early Autism Project, a non-profit organization designed to help families with autistic children. I also worked at a summer camp called the Global Youth Village, located in Bedford, Virginia, that focused on international cultural exchange and conflict resolution.

"I have just completed a year of AmeriCorps service with Academy of Hope, and am happy to be continuing my service with Byte Back. I hope to continue in the education non-profit field, and maybe one day create or manage a project myself." -- Nicholas Osmanski



*Joseph Lewis, volunteer
instructor*

"It has been a privilege for me, as a second-year AmeriCorps volunteer, to gain my professional development, not only from teaching and watching students challenge themselves and grow, but also marketing computer training classes to the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. Recently, a deaf prospective student was ultimately thrilled about registering for Personal Computing for Beginners and wrote to me, via email: 'The last time I used a computer was 7 years ago! I look forward to getting myself tuned up!' Reading this email sure did make my day, knowing my work makes a difference and may impact a student and their life in a positive way." -- Joseph Lewis



*Cristina Moscoso, volunteer
instructor*

"Most of my students are Spanish-speaking. A lot of them still have family back in their home countries that they can hardly speak to because of the high cost of international calling. Because of this, I decided to create a brand new lesson in my curriculum that included Skype and Facebook. My students loved it! Many of them have already created accounts and have been able to get in contact with friends and family back home. Best of all, it was all free for them!" -- Cristina Moscoso

Volunteer Opportunities

"Volunteering is the most effective means to give back to your community, and to continue to develop the human spirit."
--Ted Frazier, volunteer instructor

Byte Back is always eager to take on volunteers. Whether you're a student or a participant in a service learning program, or a student or alumnus who wants to stay connected with us, volunteering is an excellent way to stay in touch with our community and help us bridge the digital divide.

If you'd like to volunteer or learn more about volunteer opportunities, please contact Byte Back Director of Volunteer Services Eleanor Grewal at egrewal@byteback.org or (202) 529-3395.

About Byte Back

Founded in 1997, Byte Back seeks to improve economic opportunity in the Washington, D.C. area by providing computer literacy and job training for disadvantaged communities. Byte Back offers courses ranging from basic computer literacy to Microsoft Office to internationally recognized computer certification preparation. Byte Back is licensed by the DC Educational Licensure Commission as a Postsecondary Educational Institution.

