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Computers become a career

By Don Manley

dmanley@news-press.com

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Dennis DiSilvestro is a one-man, do-it-all dynamo in the ever-evolving realm of information technology.

The list of services provided by his home-based company, Imagitec Systems Consultants, is long and varied.

Repair, upgrades and installation, troubleshooting, programming, Web design, wired and wireless networking and software training are just some of the company's offerings. The technician, as well as owner and president, is none other than DeSilvestro himself.

While corporate clients and large projects, such as installing wireless networks at two Sanibel Island resorts, are an important part of his business, so is servicing residential customers, he said.

His passion for computers developed during childhood thanks to a friend who had one of the first programmable PCs on the market.

DiSilvestro bought his first computer, a Radio Shack model called The CoCo, at the age of 14, using savings from his paper route.

It was 1979, a time when a mouse, hard drives and the Internet, much less its high speed version, were the stuff of imagination.

"I may have been one of the first people to get the Radio Shack color computer in the city of Philadelphia," he said as the pieces of a disassembled laptop lay neatly on his kitchen counter.

DiSilvestro said he and a classmate became information technology entrepreneurs that same year by starting their own programming operation, providing accounting and payroll software they'd created to businesses.

In fact, programming was initially his career goal. But his focus shifted during his time at Drexel University, when he landed a five-month co-op job through the school, at the Pentagon.

The 19-year-old was part of a group that evaluated software for the Air Force. It was also where got his first taste of computer repair.

"It was the moment I decided programming wasn't what I



Don Manley/news-press.com

- Dennis DiSilvestro, president and owner of Imagitec Systems Consulting in south Fort Myers.

Order Picture**PROFILE: DENNIS DISILVESTRO**

- Age: 40
- Residence: South Fort Myers
- Birthplace: Philadelphia
- Education: Attended Drexel University in Philadelphia, where he studied computer science. An associates degree in electronics engineering from Lyons Technical Institute in Philadelphia.
- Family: Wife Marilyn and sons Dennis, 17, and Andrew, 15.
- Time in this area: 14 years
- What brought you here: "The job atmosphere in Philadelphia was terrible at the time. I'd already been working for Chico's as a store manager. I just thought remaining in retail wasn't a good idea at the time. My parents were already living here at the time and we came down to visit and once I got down here, I just fell in love with Fort Myers and the small-town atmosphere."

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wanted to do, it was electronics," he said.

While he has dabbled in other career fields — such as video production, retail management and teaching robotics at a Philadelphia technical school — DiSilvestro said he's never drifted far from information technology.

"I kept coming back to computers," he said. "Every time I turned around, someone would want some help with their computer."

DiSilvestro said he was part of Chico's information technology staff in 1995 when he started Imagitec as a part-time pursuit. In 1996, the business' growth enabled him to make it a full-time job.

He took time recently to reflect on his thoughts about his career, his business and the computer, itself:

When and why did you decide to make your computers your career: "I had a neighbor, William Smeltzer, who was president and CEO of a company that was one of the first companies producing main frame computers for the government. He told me that computers were going to change the world and he thought I had the stuff to handle it. He gave me a certificate for a programming class at Radio Shack. I took that class and I was hooked."

What do you enjoy about your work: "I love the interaction with people. I kind of get almost a high from solving problems. I'm a perpetual troubleshooter. I love the challenge of solving a problem. Whether it's someone who needs a specialized program to run their business to teaching a 94-year old woman how to use e-mail. I also get a kick out of seeing people's faces when we solve a problem or we teach them something they didn't know before."

Greatest source of pride in your career: "I take a lot of pride in the fact that I'm adamant don't get taken advantage of in my field. I know there are a lot of people who'd be happy to sell you a new computer. I prefer making sure you get service that has real value and you have someone who can trust."

And greatest frustrations: "When there are 101 screws just to fix one part and when someone calls and says their e-mail doesn't work, there are literally 15 things that could be wrong and they all want help over the phone."

Key safety precautions for computer owners: Universal Power Supply battery back-ups for each PC to provide protection beyond what a surge protector provides during our frequent power outages; installation of software to protect against viruses, adware and spyware; installation of software that automatically backs-up important data using the computer's CD or DVD burner. "I don't know that anybody can place a price tag on some of the information that's on their computer."

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