

# St. Andrew Development aims at improving our health

by Lisa Wolf

**M**ore than 90 million American adults are literacy challenged. That sad fact opened a door for Frank McKee's company, St. Andrew Development. While working on a nursing productivity project, he learned about a failed attempt the client had when it launched a program to increase the number of minorities that receive health screening and testing. McKee's company was asked to take a look at the information and quickly realized the problem. It was in paper format and the material was written at the 11th grade level. Most of the target audience reads at a 5th grade level. So St. Andrew Development proposed a solution, called WellnessLink, to create an interactive system that would be graphically appealing and contain reading level appropriate content. That program today is sponsored by the American Cancer Society and deployed across the country at hospitals, companies and community locations to send a powerful message about early cancer detection and prevention in a novel way.

Kiosks are the primary delivery vehicle for the projects the company undertakes. As McKee explains, "Interactivity is a key element associated with learning. We have found there is a greater

retention of information when the user actively participates in extracting it."

McKee's passion for this work is evident when you talk with him. He was a computer programmer and worked in operations management before starting his own software development company. "We have a clear mission of education and I have a passion for this type of work," says McKee.

## Zombie's message resonates with kids

Using a gruesome looking zombie to represent the tobacco companies, St. Andrew Development created the Tobacco Prevention Portal (TPP) in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Department of Health as a way to prevent and stop teenage smoking. The award winning zombie's message is clear. He shoots straight in his eerie voice. "More than 5 million of you will die prematurely due to a decision you make now—the decision to start smoking. Smoking will kill more teens each year than AIDS, alcohol, drug abuse, car crashes, murders, and suicide combined. And we don't care. We own you!"

In order to get the message through to the target audience, it had to be graphically appealing and written in a way that resonates with kids. They process and perceive information differently from adults, which makes delivering understandable health information one of the greatest challenges health educators face.



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**Frank McKee**, President,  
St. Andrew Development

The TPP is getting rave reviews among teens because the system was designed for them. As the team at St. Andrew Development knows: "The user is not like me" and they approached the design that way.

In addition to working with leaders in the field of smoking prevention like the American Lung Association and the Institute for Health Communities, the company reached out to its target audience—the students—and got them involved in the development. They gathered focus groups of kids to review everything from color selection to videos and narration.

St. Andrew Development also tracks the way kids use the system.

### Interactive learning

All of the projects the company produces contain information that can be read, listened to and seen in video form. This ensures that the users receive information the way in which they are most comfortable. As Rhonda Stump, president and founder of LearningTek, who partnered with St. Andrew on development of the TPP puts it, "Over two thousand years ago, Socrates realized that people understand more when they ask a question than when they are told an answer. He knew that to promote learning, an active two-way process between teacher and student was key."

When asked why the kiosks perform better at spreading these messages than the Internet, McKee points out that "People think the Internet is a panacea. The type of information that we are trying to convey information people are necessarily going to seek out on the Internet. Secondly, often times the intended audience isn't using it. Statistics indicate that 70% of users are Caucasian and Asian, and 30% are African Americans and Hispanics.

You have to consider the demographics of the audience you want to reach. Kiosks located in the right places draw people in because they are curious. They offer a chance to grab their attention and give them information the way they want to see it."



### Expanding the message

The Tobacco Prevention Portal is a first step for St. Andrews in this field. The company recently received funding to further develop the system to address other preventable disease. Right now that system is called TODAY—tobacco, obesity, diabetes, asthma and you. Based in part on the PA Department of Health "Keystone

Healthy Zone" concept, the TODAY system will present information in English and Spanish to age specific audiences about getting into the Healthy Living Zone. The system can also be configured for an adult audience. The company plans to market it to workplaces interested in promoting employee wellness.

Not only is it important for content on these systems to be appropriate for the audience's reading level, they must also take into account cultural issues. St. Andrew Development recently completed a portal for Grady Health System in Atlanta targeted at Latino women. It was designed to promote breast health and needed to dispel many of the myths that surround breast cancer in the community. For example, many Latinos believe that breast cancer is always fatal and the appearance of lumps always means breast cancer. The Latino Breast Health portal works to dispel these and other myths through the power of interactive education.

Information exists that can save lives. Now it is up to companies like St. Andrew Development to deliver it in innovative ways that will make people stop and digest it. **IT**



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## Pugliese Associates

500 North Third Street Ninth Floor Harrisburg, PA 17101

Phone (717) 238-9078 Fax (717) 238-7554

and

425 Sixth Avenue Suite 2440 Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Phone (412) 553-8995 Fax (412) 553-8945