

CASTING CALL

When Greg Ford '11 talks about his project for the Information Technology 101 course, the extra credit he earned is practically the last thing he mentions. Not that the grade boost wasn't notable: It helped bring his freshman GPA up to 4.0. It's just that for Ford, the assignment for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) delivered a lot more than a few bonus points.



Brian Smith

Honoring Commitment . . .
CIS faculty member Mark Frydenberg was honored this spring by the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. He is pictured with Heidi Daniels, executive director of the JDRF New England chapter (left), and Lauren Shields, public outreach manager.

“I’d never really done anything like that before,” Ford says of his work to create online audio and video content for the world’s largest charitable funder and advocate of research on type 1 diabetes. “It was really interesting, learning all these different apps to edit and upload video. And working with JDRF . . . that gave me the firsthand experience of working with a company as a professional.”

The opportunity for Ford and his classmates marks year three of a collaboration between JDRF and a Bentley IT course taught by Mark Frydenberg, senior lecturer in computer information systems.

In 2006, staff at the Bay State branch of the foundation’s New England chapter started brainstorming about ways to make the content of their annual Spring Research Briefing available to those who weren’t able to attend the event. A podcast seemed like the perfect answer, but they needed to find someone with the technical expertise to pull it off.

“I immediately thought of Bentley,” says JDRF Public Outreach Manager Lauren Shields, whose husband, Joe Shields, graduated from the school in 2000. “When I Googled ‘podcast’ and ‘Bentley,’ it was clear that Mark was the best person to contact.”

She approached the professor with a proposal to cover the JDRF gathering.

“It struck me as a perfect student project,” reports Frydenberg. “They learn to create audio and video in class, and post multimedia to the Web for homework. But this wasn’t like a homework assignment, because all of a sudden the students were responsible to someone who was relying on them.”

Frydenberg’s primary task each year has been to find three or four students to undertake the assignment, and then play project manager. The 2009 team was Ford and fellow freshmen Victoria Bergantino, Geoffrey McLaughlin and April Watkins. In addition to recording audio, the four created video of the event as well as user-friendly slideshows of presentations to put online at <http://jdrfne.blogspot.com>.

“Knowing that so many people depended on us, it was sort of like having a job,” says Ford. “I did feel more responsible.”

According to Shields, the students’ work has been very well-received by JDRF members. “They’re excited that this option is available. The information is easily accessible for those who weren’t able to attend the event, and for anyone who wants to learn more about our research efforts. Other chapters around the country have been interested, and the project has served as a best practice.”

Frydenberg, who was honored for his contributions at the JDRF’s volunteer awards ceremony in June, hopes to see the partnership continue.

“Students walked away from IT 101 with a story they can tell,” he says. “It’s a résumé builder, and it made a difference because it got the JDRF message out.

“It’s been a great opportunity — helping students take what they know and apply it in a real context.” ♦ **Debina Chakraborty**

▶ To learn more about the work of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, go to www.jdrf.org.