'Coding' training courses to be offered

By HILLARY GAVAN Senior staff writer | Posted: Saturday, September 10, 2016 10:00 am

BELOIT — Those with interest in computer coding may want to consider an eight-week training offered by the Refactor School of Code to be held at Irontek. The intensive training program will produce computer programmers to serve the area's growing technology sector.

Refactor founder and CEO Michael Hart said the course is targeted toward adults, although some high school students may qualify. Students may enroll with no prior experience.

The intensive class is held three nights a week with each class lasting three hours. People aren't required to have any coding experience, but must have a knack for solving problems independently.

The initial class will prepare its graduates for entry level jobs as a junior level web developers. Students will learn the three main languages for web development — Javascript, HTML and CSS.

Hart said he's networked with local technology companies such as Comply 365, which serves the airline industry, and Practice Velocity, which offers software solutions for medical practices. Two other website development firms that develop sites for small businesses have agreed to consider new graduates from the program as well.

If the first session is successful, Hart would like to offer another web development class in Beloit and Rockford in the future and eventually a class on how to build mobile applications for smart phones and other devices.

At Comply 365, for example, there is a team of eight developers, but the mobile development team only has three people on it.

"It's very difficult to find mobile application development," he said.

Computer science jobs are the largest source of new wages in the United States.

"There are half a million computer science jobs in this country and it will grow at twice the rate of other jobs in the next decade," Hart said.

Hart knows the benefits of learning code firsthand. He worked for several years as a music teacher. Although he said he loved his work, he didn't feel he could support his family on his salary. The starting wage for a teacher at the time in the Belvidere School District was $40,000. A starting web developer typically starts working for $60,000 with increases to follow.

"If I wanted to support my family, I had to find a different career. I took online courses and found a job at Comply 365," Hart said.

Hart said he enjoys his new career where he gets to create things and solve problems for people. He said he wanted to offer opportunities for other people looking to change careers or find employment.

Refactor will open its doors this fall in Beloit's new Irontek facility.

"We are so excited to begin hosting Refactor at Irontek this fall," said Erin Clausen, Irontek's Community Manager "As the center of Beloit's tech-hub, this is exactly the kind of activity and entrepreneurship we want to cultivate. It will be a great addition to the space."

Enrollment is now open for Refactor's first session, scheduled to begin in October. For more information or to enroll, visit www.refactorschool.com.