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## Local entrepreneur makes connections

By Mark Reilly – Staff Writer

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Greg Scott likes to say that he hasn't had a "real job" in 11 years. But he certainly keeps busy. He's now leading his second startup venture, InfraSupport Corp., a networking firm that helps to find and eliminate computer security threats in businesses.

He's also networking globally, helping lead Bible study camps in Ukraine and connecting families with loved ones serving in the U.S. military in Afghanistan or Iraq.

Scott said he was drawn to technology and computers early, when his ninth-

The firm, Scott Consulting, was a general-purpose IT consulting firm that quickly expanded to 11 people and annual revenue of \$2.2 million. But even before the dot-com crash that was to come a year later, Scott said the consulting business was beginning to feel the slide.

"Everybody was doing well, and then business just dried up," he said.

He sold the company to another business -- which folded some months later after the bottom really fell out of the market -- and launched InfraSupport.

Scott said he learned some lessons from his first business. "You can't be a generalist; there are too many providers out there doing the same thing. You have to focus on something and be great at it."

InfraSupport's focus is security, helping mid-sized companies spot and eliminate spyware and malicious programs lurking on networks.

It's a common problem, but Scott said most would-be customers are still in denial. "Everybody thinks they're secure, but most aren't. I tell them that they've got these programs that are using their networks to forward Viagra e-mails to people, and they don't care."

Some learn to care, though.

"I had somebody blow me off, and a couple months later, I get a panicked call saying their ISP locked them out because they were pumping out so much spam," he said. That problem was quickly corrected.

Scott believes the market will continue to develop as people get better acquainted with the threats. "It's a great niche, but there's a lot of education that needs to happen."

Away from work, Scott is active with his church and a group called Hope International organizing mission trips to Ukraine. He and others have gone there several times to teach English and run Bible camps at a small city south of Kiev, peopled largely with survivors of the Chernobyl disaster.

Those trips led Scott to a side project -- making audio and video recordings of Ukrainians' personal stories, both of the disaster and the forced resettlement by the Soviet government.

Scott also enlisted his church last year to help families of armed forces personnel serving in Iraq and Afghanistan talk with their families via videoconferencing. He got the idea when e-mailing a church member overseas, a gunnery sergeant in the Marines.

"He was asking, 'Why can't we do something where I'd be at church?'" Scott said.

Scott tinkered with some videoconferencing setups and eventually recruited equipment maker Polycom and telecom provider TDS Metrocom to launch Operation Connect last December.

"When we had that first link up and running, I was ready to break down and bawl," he said.

The three companies are planning other Twin Cities-to-Iraq links this summer, working with the Minnesota Twins, St. Paul Saints and the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce.

Bruce Nustad, vice president of membership development for the St. Paul Chamber, praised Scott's initiative for helping to launch the videoconferencing effort.

"What's great about Greg is the passion he brings," Nustad said. "A lot of the time, the resources aren't the hard part to muster; it's the passion that's hard to find."

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