THE Westchester County Times
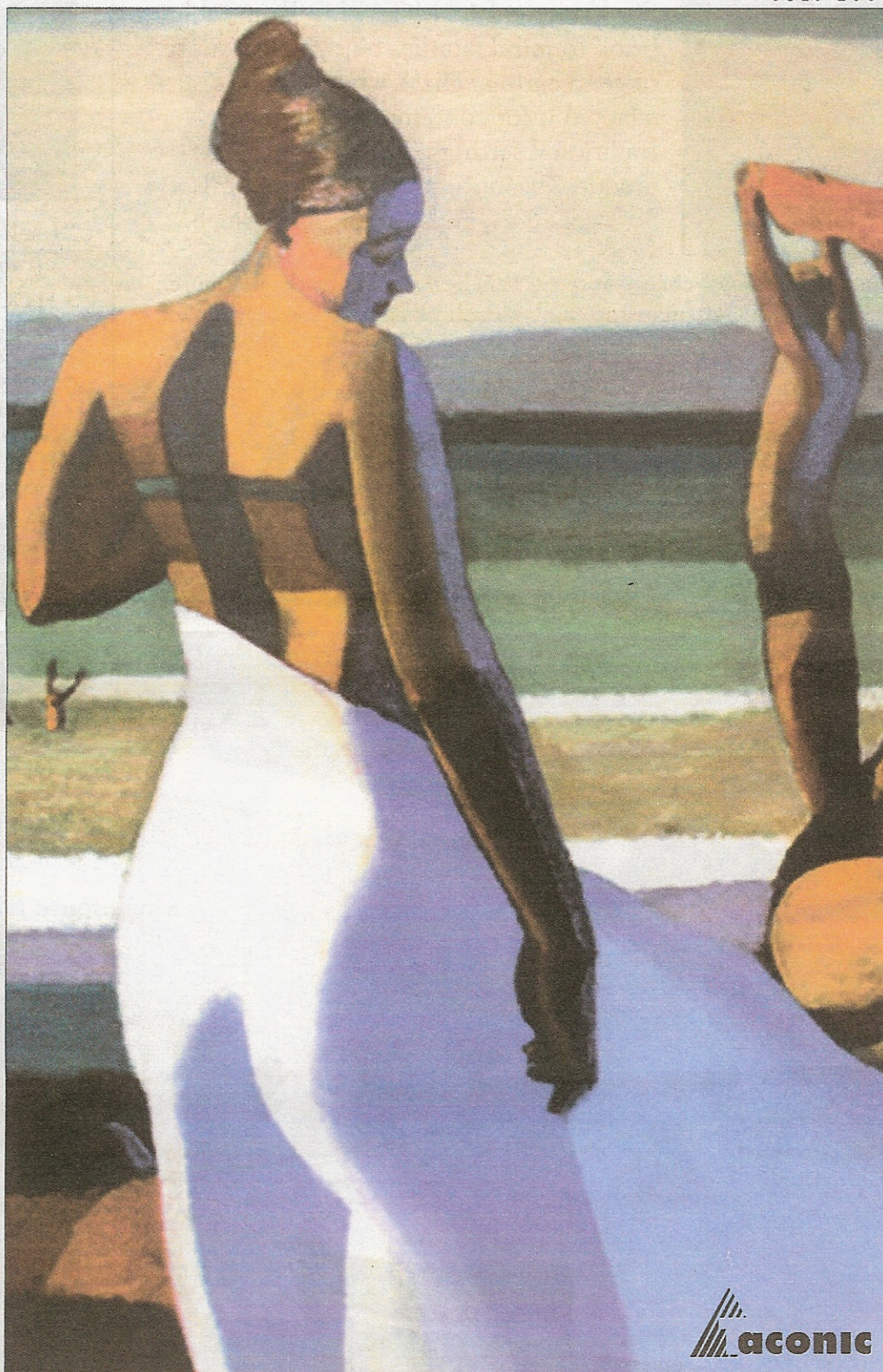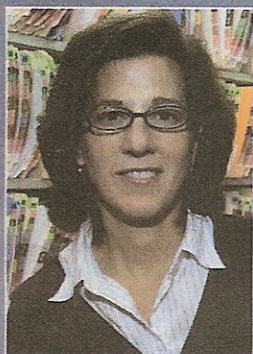
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GET INTO THE WESTCHESTER ART SCENE THIS SUMMER

Friends Indeed
Introducing Armonk Computer Solutions

It all started on the school bus. Two Armonk teenagers, acquaintances at the time but not good friends, happened to be sharing a seat. Their conversation turned to computers.

One of the boys, Jeremy Blum, had a job with a computer technician who worked out of a small shop in the village. Just the day before, his boss had mentioned he could use another pair of hands to help with computer repair. Jeremy asked his seatmate, Greg Skloot, if he was interested, and Greg was hired.

Several months later their employer decided to move out West. The young men lost a job but they had gained a solid background in the many aspects of computer repair. So about a year ago, when the two were 14-year-old freshmen at Byram Hills High School, they decided to go into business for themselves.

"We discussed the idea with our parents and they encouraged us," says Jeremy, "but we planned and executed it ourselves."

Their company, Armonk Computer Solutions, is now operating, very successfully, out of Greg Skloot's basement. The basement, in the Skloot family's home on a residential street near Armonk village, is large enough to contain both a laundry room and the company. The business side of the room is crammed with computers, monitors, and file cabinets where the boys keep a neat arrangement of discs, software, and paperwork.

Although they are only 15 years old, they are "both really organized," Jeremy adds. "We both have the ability to run things on our own."

Jeremy's first computer experience, he recalls, "was with a really old Mac when I was five years old. Eventually my dad got me a Dell and I started working with it. Sometimes I'd break it and then I'd fix it."

"I had a Gateway when I was nine," adds Greg. "Just like Jeremy, I would just plunge in, break it and fix it."

Greg Skloot and Jeremy Blum, above. Skloot doing his thing, at right.

Today the two are concentrating on fixing—improving a computer's speed and performance by offering complete tune-ups; reinstalling operating systems; backing up data and recovering lost files, and installing upgrades. They will hook up new computers and set up home computer networks, and they offer free consultations.

They are prepared to help computer owners answer many common questions, such as these listed on their Web site: Is your computer running way to slow? What would you do if you lost all of your important files? Your computer just crashed, your data wasn't backed up...now what?

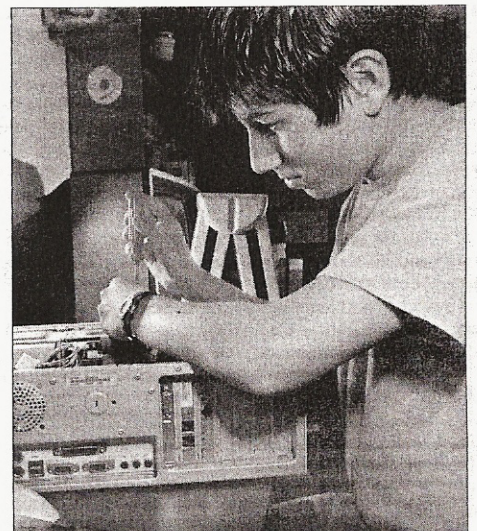They also provide personalized in-home computer training courses, including how to protect yourself against viruses and hackers; how to navigate the Web; the basics of Windows XP and E-mail, and how to maintain your network

With a partner, Zachary Lynn, another classmate, the boys set up Armonk Web Solutions, offering such services as Web site design, graphic design, database development, and web site maintenance. The company's portfolio includes web site designs for about 20 businesses, including the Green Hollow Tennis Club in East Hampton, Wysteria Gifts and Big Jake Productions in Armonk, and Pattycake Productions in Bedford.
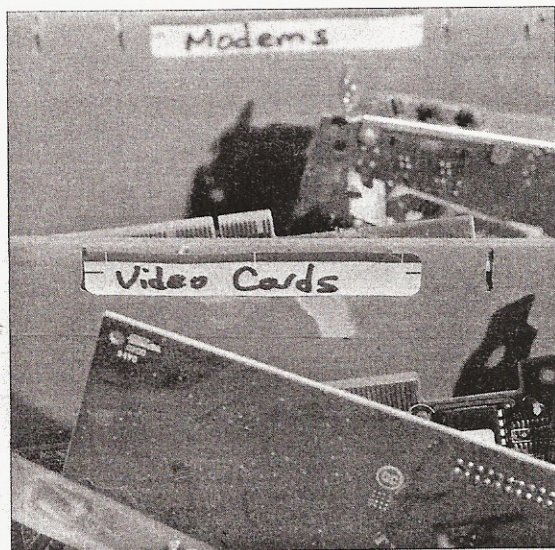
Greg and Jeremy spend at least half of their working time on their charity program, in which they

Computer parts ready for use, above and Blum on the job.

tification. "It's an important standard," says Greg. "Once we get that, we can go on to higher levels."

They say they have never had a problem juggling work and school. "We made a commitment that we would always put school first," says Jeremy.

"We work on weekends and vacations," adds Greg. "We can handle schoolwork and the business. It all balances out."

All the services provided by Armonk Computer Solutions are available in the shop or in the customer's home. Until the two turn 16, Jeremy says, "our parents are stuck with the job of driving us around."

To reach Armonk Computer Solutions 330-9849 or log onto www. armonkpc.com.

donate refurbished computers, monitors, keyboards, printers, and other computer accessories, as well as their expertise, to local nonprofit organizations. Last year, they donated computers to a Mount Kisco church. This year, their rabbi at Armonk's Congregation B'Nai Yisrael, Seth Limmer, suggested they make their donations to Neighbors Link, a community center in Mount Kisco that provides services to Latino immigrants.

They have repaired and replaced several of the computers used in Neighbors Link's computer classes, and plan eventually to donate computers to individual students. They have also set up a wired network throughout the center that allows

the organization to take advantage of a donor database system.

"What's so great about these kids," said Carola Bracco, executive director of Neighbors Link, in a recent newsletter, "is that they have decided to reach out to the community and apply their skills in a meaningful way. Without them, I don't know how we would have gotten this done."

Armonk Computer Solutions has attracted clients from many sources: their work at the computer repair business, classmates, friends of their parents and recommendations from satisfied customers. The two continue to update their skills. "We are constantly doing research on new technology," says Greg. "And the more we do, the more we learn."

They now are preparing to take a test for something called A+ cer-