

PRESS RELEASE

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Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Code Websites for Local Clients at CODEchella

YouthBuild Charter School of California Hosts CODEchella event at L.A. Trade Tech College

(Los Angeles, CA – April 11, 2015) On Saturday, April 9th, [YouthBuild Charter School of California](#) (YCSC), with sponsorship from [Colocation America](#), hosted a 12-hour coding event called CODEchella at Los Angeles Trade Tech College. At the event, forty YCSC students worked in teams with coding mentors from local tech companies, including [Factual](#), [Second Spectrum](#), [Firebrain](#), and [Goliath Graffix](#), to design websites for local clients. The students, all of whom are between the ages of 16-24 and were former high school dropouts, previously had little to no experience in coding websites. Leading up to the event on Saturday, the students gave up a week of their Spring Break to attend a coding boot camp that included intensive classes in HTML, CSS and Adobe Photoshop, designed to help them learn skills that will translate into jobs to lift them out of poverty.

“In the beginning, students said they were just doing this for the credits,” said YCSC Assistant Principal Aaron Scholl, referring to the five technology credits students could earn for participating in the event. “But by the end of the event, the students were all talking about how much they had learned and how much fun it was.”

At CODEchella, students designed websites specifically for local clients to help give back to their community. By working with their business clients to design a website that met their needs, the students had an opportunity to not only build their web design skills, but also their entrepreneurial skills. Clients included local restaurant La Cevicheria, the Newton Area Community Police Advisory Board, and Ellen Sanchez Consulting, among others.

“The students were amazing, as were the mentors,” said client Ellen Sanchez. “It was such a great event and [getting a free website was] such a gift.”

A panel of industry leaders-- including Second Spectrum Co-Founder and CTO Jeff Su and Founder of URBAN Teens eXploring Technology (URBAN TxT) Oscar Menjivar—judged the websites, and awarded prizes for best overall website, best project manager, and best presentation, as well as certificates of achievement and gift certificates donated by [MakersKit](#) to all of the students for completing 40 hours of computer science coursework.

“CODEchella is a perfect example of what is possible when the community backs its young people,” said judge and event sponsor, Colocation America’s VP of Online Strategies Sam Walters. “From the local businesses who served as clients to the Los Angeles-based technology companies that mentored the students-- thank you for making CODEchella possible.”

CODEchella created an environment for young people who are traditionally underrepresented in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields to present their skills and work alongside tech professionals, who were also excited to give back to the community and work with the next generation of STEM leaders.

“It was great to have so many local stakeholders collaborate for this event,” said Nadia Despenza, STEM Coordinator at YCSC and founder of CODEchella. “CODEchella brought together businesses, community members, technology companies, freelance coders, and a high school around the shared desire to support a group of young people of color as they explore the field of computer science and learn how technology could be used to transform communities.”

1st prize went to the website created for Ellen Sanchez Consulting by students Marysa Carmona, Luis Lara and Amber Rodney: <http://ellensanchezconsulting.com>. As Project Manager, Marysa took home the biggest prize of the night, an Xbox One.

“What could be cooler than spending 12 hours of your Saturday at an event called CODEchella?” said the winning team’s mentor Adam Wexler, a software engineer at Second Spectrum. “The presentation at the end was flawless. The entire room lit up when [Marysa] finished. It was clear that she had not only made significant contributions to the project, but had also discovered a new interest in [learning how to code.]”

All of the students’ websites can be viewed at the following links (most of these links will only be live for another week before they are transferred to updated URLs for the clients.):

codechella2016.com/comm-policing

codechella2016.com/cstac

codechella2016.com/fair-chance

codechella2016.com/kelly-kay

codechella2016.com/cevicheria

awlcmc.com

codechella2016.com/sarah-park

To see photos from the event, go to:

<http://www.youthbuildcharter.org/news-events/codechella/codechella-2k16-photo-gallery>

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About YouthBuild Charter School of California

YouthBuild Charter School of California (YCSC) works with young people between the ages of 16-24 who left high school without a diploma. At YCSC, students are able to re-engage with a different approach to learning, in which students participate in research, analysis and community action projects. Currently, YCSC works with 19 local non-profit YouthBuild programs across California to provide young people with a second chance to earn a diploma. To learn more, visit the website: www.youthbuildcharter.org