

# FOCUS

Technique • Friday, May 28, 2004

## DAY AFTER TOMORROW

Where will you be *The Day After Tomorrow*? Find out how this summer flick stacks up against other disaster blockbusters. Page 9

## BASEBALL CLINCHES SEASON

After a resounding defeat of Maryland, Tech Baseball advances in the ACC tournament. Page 16



# Blowing to a retro tune, new whistle debuts

By Smitha Prasad  
Contributing Writer  
gte598n@mail.gatech.edu

As Tech students came back from their week-long semester break to start summer term, some of them noticed a small but distinct difference on campus—the whistle.

The high-pitched, single-toned sound that could be heard as far as the Varsity is gone, and its replacement is quite different from what the students are accustomed to.

"I thought it was a train at first," said Ethan Trehwitt, fourth-year Electrical Engineering major, "but someone told me it had been changed out."

Harold Cash, superintendent of the Tech Power Plant, became concerned after he had to use his last remaining spare part to repair a crack in the industrial steam whistle that occurred during a fall 2002 football game.

"We didn't have any spare parts left, and we also go through periods when people 'borrow' the whistle," Cash said, adding that there wouldn't have been a replacement if something did happen to the current one.

After stopping by the Alumni House and seeing the actual whistle used during the 1900s on display, Cash had the idea to model a new whistle based on this original one.

To accomplish this, he turned to Dennis Brown, manager of the Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI)

Machine Shop. The Machine Shop, which services GTRI, Tech and other schools in the University System of Georgia, had done quite a bit of maintenance on Tech's steam plant, and Brown was especially interested in taking on this project.

"It was a great opportunity for this department to build something that was more visual for the Institute," Brown said. "I've been here 25 years, and I've been hearing the whistle for a while. I just thought it was a great idea."

The Machine Shop took about four months to research the Alumni House whistle, which involved

photographing, measuring and drawing it.

Because the whistle's bell was missing, the team researched photographs and patterns of

similar whistles from the early 1900s, to produce an authentic design in AutoCAD.

The actual assembly of the whistle took a week, including chemical treatment in the Machine Shop's Cobb County facility. The final cost of the new whistle was \$7,000 but because the design was completed in AutoCAD, producing replicas will cost even less.

During summer term, a good number of students on or around campus spend their time working or doing research—as opposed to taking classes—which makes it harder for them to be on campus at



By Ethan Trehwitt / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Created using AutoCAD, the newly installed Tech steam whistle has drawn mixed reviews from students. The whistle's design was derived from an old model kept in the Alumni House.

five minutes till the hour to notice the change.

"I've only got one class right now, and it's that CS class where you only go to the first two or three classes. So I haven't even been there to hear it,"

said Miles Thomason, fourth-year Computer Science major.

Leslie Coburn, a Biomedical Engineering Ph.D. student, agrees. "I am across campus at the IBB, so I don't know if I would be able to

hear it anyway," Coburn said, "In all honesty, I didn't even know that there was a new one."

However, some students have

See Whistle, page 8

# Students use computing to "Cut Out Hunger"

By Joshua Cuneo  
Senior Staff Writer  
gte593z@mail.gatech.edu

Grocery stores may not know it, but the right coupons combined with the right sales can mean savings of 50 percent or more on the final bill. The trick, of course, is coordinating the two.

That's the service provided by [www.cutouthunger.org](http://www.cutouthunger.org). Once a struggling inefficient web site, it was taken on by four computer science majors—Karl Zipperer, Max Blinder, Daag Alemayehu and Rick Arnet—for their senior design project last fall.

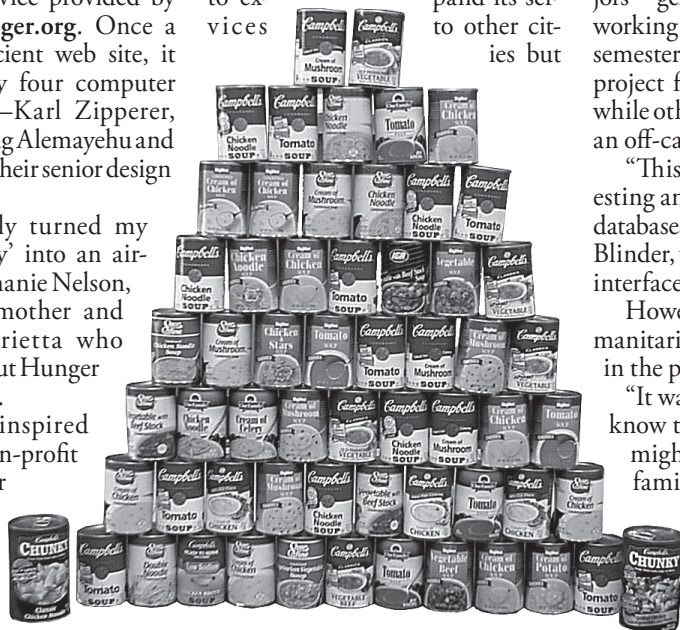
"They literally turned my 'horse and buggy' into an airplane!" said Stephanie Nelson, a stay-at-home mother and resident of Marietta who started the Cut Out Hunger program in 2000.

Nelson was inspired to create the non-profit Cut Out Hunger program in September 2000 following a visit to a local food pantry. She noticed the pantry turning away needy families due to inadequate supplies, so she surmised that if more shoppers took advantage of coupons and deals they could

save money on their grocery bill and purchase extra food for donations.

Cut Out Hunger was born the following March, and Nelson manually entered in deals and coupon information every week for grocery stores in the Atlanta area.

The site grew to 1,000 visitors a week. Nelson saw an opportunity to expand its services to other cities but



lacked the time and technical knowledge to do it herself. She presented her dilemma to John Stasko, associate professor in the College of

Computing, who offered the project to his senior design students in August 2003.

"We push our students to find a project that's interesting technically but also has real world impact," Stasko said.

Senior design projects—a requirement for all computer science majors—generally consume 750-1,000 working hours over the course of the semester. Some students choose a project for a student organization while others may select a project for an off-campus client.

"This project...look[ed] interesting and matched my interest [in databases] in computer science," said Blinder, who designed the end-user interface.

However, the team also cites humanitarian reasons for their interest in the project.

"It was a lot more motivating to know the system I was designing might help put food on some family's table than...writing a new system for an insurance firm would have been," Zipperer said.

It took the team the entire semester to redesign the web site, since they started essentially from scratch.

"Before we could begin to build the system, we spent a lot of

time defining and redefining the requirements," Zipperer said. "We were probably halfway through the semester before we had a totally clear idea of what the system was going to do."

According to Blinder, constructing the system itself then proceeded rapidly.

"The steps to create the system mirror the typical flow of a software project: requirement gathering, system/architecture design, implementation, testing, iteration," he said. "Since PHP is a rapid development environment, we were able to create the system in a fairly short time. Most of the resources were already provided by the client."

In the end, the team had transformed [www.cutouthunger.org](http://www.cutouthunger.org) into an automated, professional database system. An administrator can now update the site by scanning in the barcodes of the week's coupons, and an improved interface eases access to the site's data. They also created a 'deals list' tool that allows Nelson

to more easily match coupons with grocery deals in the database.

"Whereas before [Nelson] could only manage and update one region at a time, she can now manage dozens of regions in a fraction of the original time," Blinder said. "The new design has enabled [Nelson] to get more done and afforded more conveniences and an improved interaction experience to the end-users."

According to Nelson, the new system has reduced her data entry time from 15 hours a week for one city to five hours for ten. And the web site has thrived as a result.

Statistically, the site now averages about 5000 visitors a day seeking

deals for 23 states. The estimated savings for those using the Cut Out Hunger site is \$200 a month per family for a total \$24 million each year, according to Nelson.

She has appeared on Good Morning America promoting the program, which, she said, has prompted inter-

See Website, page 8



Winner receives a free student combo from Li'l Dinos

# Tech Up Close

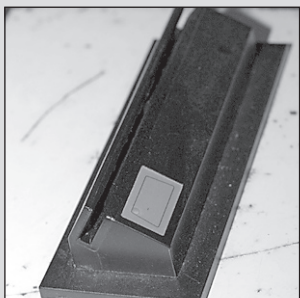


Last week's winner:

Will Welch

Last week's Tech Up  
Close:

BuzzCard Reader



By Jamie Howell / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

email: [focus@technique.gatech.edu](mailto:focus@technique.gatech.edu)

## Website from page 8

est in a book and more TV and radio spots.

But the best part, she said, has been "The personal reward of seeing so much food donated to charity, hearing so many stories of people being helped financially themselves, and seeing the joy that people experience when they become 'givers.'"

In the end, the project was also a beneficial experience for the Georgia Tech team.

"[It] allowed me to experience what is involved in designing and building a system for use in the real world," Zipperer said. "...Actually getting everything set up to function reliably under realistic conditions

**"[I] can hardly talk about it without crying. Let's just say I am Georgia Tech's biggest fan."**

**Stephanie Nelson**  
Founder, Cut Out Hunger

proved to be quite challenging."

Blinder added that including this project in his portfolio helped him find a job following graduation.

Nelson had only praise for the team. "I am extremely grateful to Georgia Tech... They have literally made my vision and dream come true, and their contribution will help millions of people over time," she said.

"I'll never stop telling people about what they've done for me and can hardly talk about it without crying.

Let's just say I am Georgia Tech's biggest fan."

Nelson has intentionally kept the site free to encourage shoppers to purchase and donate extra food, claiming that other sites offering similar services charge users a fee.

## Whistle from page 8

heard the whistle and noticed the change. "I think it's more interesting than the old one," Trewhitt said, "It's got more personality."

So far, though, the general consensus isn't quite as optimistic. "After four years, the old whistle for me became synonymous with Georgia Tech," said Hamza Ahmed, a recent Aerospace Engineering graduate.

"The new one is too different, and much like a train whistle, which confused me at first. It just doesn't seem to fit. Though I suppose for incoming freshmen, the new one is okay," Ahmed said.

Others are more outspoken in their protests against the change. "I recently heard the new whistle for the first time and I thought it was a truck downshifting on the Connector—it's not nearly as cool,"

said Bill Tice, a Computer Science graduate student. "It sounds like it's choking to death on a bird nest." He also added that he didn't know why the whistle needed to be changed, a common sentiment among quite a few students.

The old whistle was a traditional, hourly cornerstone of the Georgia Tech campus. It was something that the Tech community had accepted as part of their daily ritual from the day they joined the Institute.

Though the Tech community is very open to embracing older aspects of the tradition that have reemerged, for upperclassmen, the new whistle may take some getting used to.

"It was classic the way it was," Tice said. "You can't hear [the new whistle] at all from far away... although it's more symbolic, it is how a lot of people wake up for their next class."

## sliver box

[www.nique.net/sliver](http://www.nique.net/sliver)

Go Tech! #100 on the list of the 100 most unwired (read: wireless net access) colleges!

Of course, UGA is #64... now that's embarrassing...

DON'T BE HATIN'

girls at agnes scott need to stay at agnes scott. they're taking all the good guys here! :

or maybe the good guys just want more desperate girls...

jt give it up yo. it ain't gonna happen

In Atlantic City they've got silicon titties.

Huh. I made an A in HPS. And it wasn't that hard. At least when Beaver taught.

i think i just saw some girl break a guys heart at the fountain outside the library

it was terrible. I gotta go call my boyfriend now and tell him i love him

To "girl" who likes to use \*\*\*\*, the girl I asked out was playing hard to get and its been a great 3 weeks together

And I was wrong, I hope YOU enjoy being lonely with your cats when you are 40

thank you, hampton inn for allowing me to puke in the parking lot and not charge me.

why do we keep coming back to this hell hole???

tech, couches & rock n' roll :: [www.underthecouch.org](http://www.underthecouch.org)

Best & Worst of Tech: 'Nique writers should have written about the readers survey picks, not their own.

Why doesn't anyone like the different color GT stuff the bookstore sells?

I think it's a good idea. It allows people to show of their TECH spirit in more colors. Plus, its aimed at girls.

i no longer belong anywhere

goodbye tech....it's been a great four years