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Hopkinton entrepreneur wants to turn MetroWest into new Silicon Valley



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Janet Kwiatkowski of MAE Consulting Group talks about regulatory compliance at TechSandBox in Hopkinton on Monday. Local tech companies were on hand to showcase their products and services. Daily News and Wicked Local Photo/Dan Holmes

By Anamika Roy
Daily News Staff
Posted Jan. 21, 2014 @ 12:01 am

HOPKINTON - With science and technology giants such as Genzyme and Raytheon bringing jobs to MetroWest, the region is becoming increasingly attractive to technology start-ups.

Those industry stalwarts have been a huge influence in the birth of TechSandBox, an incubator that gives young companies the resources they need to succeed.

TechSandBox held a mobile, digital and software showcase on Monday, to give local start-ups the chance to work on their pitches, talk to investors and network with other companies.



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posting even asked for help to catalog a personal library.

Conversely, people can make profiles on the website to search for jobs and prove their credibility. The profiles come with a comments section and five-star rating system.

While Yared recommends users do their own research before hiring someone or applying for a job through her site, she has not had problems with spammers. The site has helped create more than 1,200 jobs.

Teenagers can make a profile once they're 14 and their parents get notifications every time they apply for a job while they are still minors.

Yared's children have used the website to get part-time jobs.

One of the focuses of TechSandBox is life sciences, what Finer likes to call "the squishy stuff."

Within that group, DNA analytics company Kbiobox is revolutionizing how doctors diagnose and treat patients. The Worcester company has designed software that looks at DNA sequences to determine exactly what sickness a patient has.

The program offers quick and accurate results, according to Kbiobox's Director of Sales Tony Cuifalo.

"It's direct and targeted," he said. "It could change the whole system."

As the use of DNA sequencers becomes more popular, Cuifalo says doctors will be able to diagnose a patient's illness within minutes. It will also help doctors prescribe antibiotics directed to the problem.

Kbiobox is working with Massachusetts General Hospital to implement the software. Working with TechSandBox helps the company with its pitches before presenting to potential clients.

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"My vision is to make MetroWest more like Silicon Valley," said founder and CEO Barbara Finer.

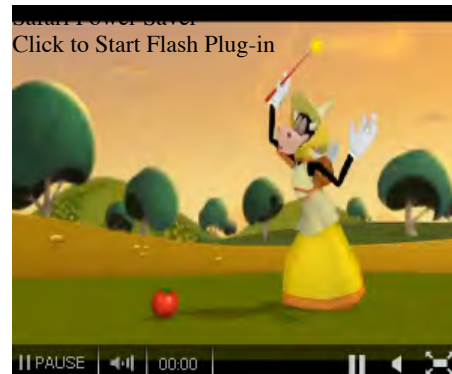
Nine companies took part. While some software on display was catered to other businesses, others like a website called HelpAroundTown.com, is geared toward suburban communities.

Help Around Town Inc. was created by a Lexington mother of two who wanted to help teenagers get their first paying jobs.

"It's CraigsList with a face and a place," said Reem Yared, founder and CEO of the job posting site.

She has used TechSandBox to increase her website's exposure.

Yared's website, which serves in 85 cities and towns across eastern Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire, lets people post ads for babysitting jobs, store positions and help with assembling furniture among other odd jobs. One



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