Neighbors and Mentors

How do you meet other local geeks or find a mentor?

By Rikki Kite

When I tell people in the open source community that our editorial offices are located in Lawrence, Kansas, they are often surprised. If they've heard of Lawrence, sometimes it's because they know about Django [1], which was created here at the World Company.

The University of Kansas is also located in Lawrence. Many open source geeks graduated from KU, including Gowalla Co-Founder and *Ajax on Rails* author Scott Raymond and Google Earth creator Brian McClendon. This fall our cool Kansas college community will become home to incoming KU freshman and 2010 Fedora Scholarship recipient Ian Weller.

Meet Geeky Neighbors

Ian recently stopped by our office (see Trevan McGee's interview with Ian in this issue). I told Ian about the wealth of IT talent we have in Lawrence. In fact, when Trevan and I wanted to test our new video camera this morning, we just walked half a block down the street to the Revolution Systems [2] office. There, we interviewed Revolution Systems founder and *Linux Pro* magazine contributor Frank Wiles and Django co-creator Jacob Kaplan-Moss about their OSCON 2010 tutorial.

I'm always surprised by the various ways I meet tech folks in my local community. For example, I first heard of Ian Weller when our author David Nalley emailed me and told me about a Kansas high school student who was an active Fedora project contributor. I'll admit that I met Frank Wiles for the first time at a local bar when a former *Sys Admin* magazine colleague introduced me to one of our local authors.

Our Editor in Chief and I met Jacob Kaplan-Moss for the first time when we set up a lunch meeting – we knew Jacob lived in town and worked a few doors down from us, but we never ran into him on the street or at an event, so we finally made our own introduction. A local user group (KULUA) meeting provided my opportunity to meet Travis Swicegood, author of *Pragmatic Version Control Using Git* [3]. And a tweet about a nearby restaurant led to a lunch meeting with City of Lawrence webmaster Eric Gruber.

Meet a Mentor

This week I read an article [4] claiming women are reluctant to help each other in their careers. The author references a study that indicates "… male mentors seem to edge out female mentors when it comes to helping proteges climb the ladder of success." I wondered how women in open source would go about meeting a mentor, and I asked a few of my contacts about mentorship programs.

Joe "Zonker" Brockmeier and Stormy Peters pointed out Gnome's 2006 outreach efforts to attract women to their Google Summer of Code projects. Stormy says, "It was a success in that we got six women to participate and complete their projects" [5]. This outreach effort will be repeated in December. "We're hoping to retain them longer term in the project," Stormy says.

Google's Cat Allman recommended the Systers [6] mailing list and says, "You get a real sense of being part of a larger community of women working in Tech." She also says, "LinuxChix in its various chapters and incarnations has been a powerful force for getting more women involved with FOSS, especially outside of the USA."

Send your suggestions for meeting local geeks to *rkite@linuxpromagazine. com*. ■■■

LIKEABLE LINKS

[1] Django: *http://www.djangoproject.com/*

[2] Revolution Systems: *http://www.revsys.com/*

[3] Travis Swicegood: *http://www. travisswicegood.com/*

[4] "Women still reluctant to help each other": *http://www.msnbc.msn.com/ id/38060072/ns/business-careers/*

[5] Gnome Outreach Program for Women: *http://live.gnome.org/ GnomeWomen/OutreachProgram*

[6] Systers: *http://anitaborg.org/ initiatives/systers/*

RIKKI KITE

Rikki Kite is Associate Publisher of *Linux Pro Magazine*, *Linux Magazine*, and *Ubuntu User*. When she's not representing the magazines at open source events, Rikki blogs about Women in Open Source at *linuxpromagazine.com/ roseblog*. Email your community updates and announcements to her at: *rkite@linuxpromagazine.com*.