



From left, Jim Szabo and Otto Schmidt, explain their Inventors College Workshops to Welland resident Steve Krar.
Photo: Allan Benner / Staff

Honing youth skills; retired teacher develops plans for inventor's camp for children

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After meeting with a group of inventors a few years ago, Otto Schmidt was left wondering why it took so long to develop an invention, and why people who come up with inventions seem to be so old.

To address those problems, Schmidt, a retired teacher of gifted children in Toronto schools, developed plans for an inventor's camp for children.

"The idea was to have young people engaged in inventing at an early age, that would be potentially the future members (of the inventor's group)," he said.

From there, he teamed up with mechanical engineer Jim Szabo to expand the idea.

"We decided that between us we had the skills that we could put something really special together," he said.

"My specialty is skills training and Jim's specialty is the technical aspect. I'm not an inventor, I'm a teacher. He's not a teacher, but he's an inventor. We're bringing the two together."

Together, they developed a series of workshops called the Inventors College Workshops.

Schmidt and Szabo will present their program during the 45th annual Advanced Technology Think Tank, organized by Welland resident Steve Krar.

The think tank is being held at Samoset Lodge in Monetville, Ont., June 3 to 7.

Ultimately, Schmidt said the new program they're launching is designed to teach young people the skills they need to make their ideas into reality.

"What we're doing here is saying, let's make it as real as possible," he said.

Drawing from his expertise in mechanical engineering and as a millwright, Szabo said he has a "very practical" approach to making things work.

"And what I'm going to do is teach these students the basic principals. Those basics are very strong tools that can apply in a broad sense," he said.

Also, as an inventor, and member of inventor groups, Szabo said he has an understanding of entrepreneurship and marketing.

In addition, he said they will also bring in professionals, entrepreneurs, patent lawyers and marketing and manufacturing industry representatives "to take those inventions into the real world."

After a few years in development, Schmidt and Szabo are preparing to offer the workshop to their first students.

"We're in the process of setting it up for our summer course in July," Schmidt said.

Through an agreement with a school board in the Brant, Haldimand Norfolk area, the initial course will be offered for students at both the elementary and high school levels.

"This is our launching pad," Schmidt said.

More information about the program is available on Schmidt's website: www.accentonskills.com