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 39120 Argonaut Way #335 Fremont, CA 94538  
 510.494.1999 Fax: 510.796.2462  
 tricityvoice@aol.com

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## A portal to the world



By William Marshak

Portal is just another word for "doorway," but this portal is something special. Located in cyberspace at [nexusbridge.com](#), the combination of words indicates a vital connection and the tagline, created by Irvington High School students - "Your Virtual Bridge to Connect, Live & Learn" - hints of the power that lies within.

It took the confluence of three lives to create the NexusBridge communication link between high school journalists in China and the United States. The concept, envisioned last summer, grew rapidly and is due to open for verbal commerce this week. Founder Paul Chan had a vital connection to mainland China. A childhood friend rose through government ranks to become the Minister of Education. Meanwhile Paul's life was immersed in trade and communications of high tech Silicon Valley companies with Asian countries, teaching college courses in Computer Science and Information Technology, advising corporations and learning institutions in the U.S. and China and founding Legend Learning Center, Inc. specializing in supplemental education and international exchange activities.

Co-Founder Benjamin Yee, a Fremont resident and the third pillar of the NexusBridge connection, had formed his own company, BKY Consulting, specializing in sales, marketing and business development for the healthcare industry. This followed an extensive background in creating several businesses focused on pharmaceutical product security, medical device manufacturing while assisting clients in starting Internet-based businesses.

At its outset, approximately 1.1 million members of the "Junior Journalist Club" in China are being enrolled in the NexusBridge forum. According to Mr. Yee, these students represent the "cream of the cream" and are all bilingual. Once this is done, Yee will inform Fremont Unified School District Superintendent Douglas Gephart and Fremont high school students, teachers and administrators will begin to register as contacts for the Chinese participants. Yee says, "Just about anybody in high school will be impacted and able to share information, pose questions and obtain resources, finding a repository for collective thoughts." The primary idea is to "bridge all these people in the high school sector in the United States and China." Chinese student participant numbers are expected to increase substantially in 2008 as will high school participation in the United States.

What originally began as a high school connection quickly blossomed to include a list of 42 colleges and universities in the United States, parts of Europe and Australia. "They saw the value of having so many high school students - and educators - on this site. This was seen as a way to provide resources and access to college admissions." Yee adds that colleges have indicated that they will use freshmen to monitor the forums and answer questions of high school seniors about filling out applications, course selection and mentoring opportunities. NexusBridge has become a magnet for more educational institutions and at last count, 82 colleges and universities including the top 40 universities in China have expressed interest in the program. Future plans for college interaction include certification programs and online college courses.

Yee notes that NexusBridge hopes to help Chinese students from all parts of China to "have a much better understanding and knowledge of the world outside China and, at the same time, develop relationships with the U.S." Adding to the excitement is the 2008 Summer Olympics scheduled to be held in Beijing. The Chinese government is anxious to develop and enhance this dialogue; plans are to set aside space for American high school students participating in NexusBridge to observe and report on the games.

NexusBridge anticipates a huge worldwide celebration of Chinese New Year through the portal which will elevate the visibility of the coming Olympic Games. Another NexusBridge effort will use two boatloads of dominoes currently on their way to the West Coast. These will be distributed to participating school districts to break the record of five million for a virtual chain of falling dominoes. Fremont will begin the cascade which will end in Beijing, China.

The power and excitement of NexusBridge is clearly evident when discussing the possibilities with Yee. He emphasizes the role of Fremont in his vision. "I am a Fremont resident and a Fremont parent with two children in the school district and want to make sure Fremont is in the spotlight." Originally designed as a local connection, Yee says that he is approached by high schools, colleges and universities throughout the world who want to become a part of NexusBridge. "I am surprised by the response and amazed that this has not been done before," says Yee. It may be that the world was just waiting for the right combination of vision, talent and knowledge.

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