



## Small start, big win

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## IT Leader Awards

Two students impressed at this year's awards with their IT prowess, reports IRENE THAM

A MICROMOUSE robotics competition held 10 years ago was where it all started for Lua Rui Ping.

Rui Ping, who was 13 at the time, was a member of the winning team from St Joseph's Institution (**SJI**), whose computer mouse took the shortest time to reach the centre of a maze. **SJI** won the top two places in the secondary school category that year.

Rui Ping's robotics conquests later won him many more accolades – the latest being the IT Youth 2008 honour.

The IT Leader Awards, in its 11th year, was given out last Friday by the Singapore Computer Society. The youth won for being an IT catalyst in the student body.

His best work yet: Codex (Collaborative Developers Ecosystem Experiment).

Still in production, the software is somewhat like Second Life, where users interact with one another in a virtual world using avatars or virtual profiles.

Codex is positioned as an online tool for people to post, share and follow up on ideas and conduct lessons. It is slated for a trial run at the Nanyang Technological University's (NTU) School of Computer Engineering by year end.

"This tool will capture the moments in the creation of new things, and not just the finished product," said the second-year student at NTU's School of Computer Engineering.

He came up with the idea after returning from a sponsored trip by Apple to the World Wide Developers Conference in San Francisco last June.

"People in the US are coding better than I am, or any Singaporean for that matter. Something is wrong. We can do more," he said.

But Codex is not a revolutionary idea – it's a variation of Second Life, which originated in Silicon Valley by a startup called Linden Labs.

Rui Ping is not bothered. He just wanted some self-taught lessons on software development that has yet to be taught in school.

"I did it (Codex) because it's tough and I wanted to get my hands dirty."

After all, many big achievements have small beginnings.

In August last year, he gathered a few schoolmates for the project. They're still helping him to write codes for the computer program. He also rallied executives from Sun Microsystems, Microsoft and Zen Cart to advise him on development work for Codex.

## On a mission

RUI Ping's dedication to computer technologies is not surprising given his pedigree.

His father is a former National University of Singapore (NUS) associate professor, and his elder sister has a Masters degree in Computer Science. They founded a technology firm called InCampus four years ago. The company has done several computer data-mining and data-analysis projects for the Singapore government.

In his free time, Rui Ping helps out at the firm, scoping out and coordinating projects.

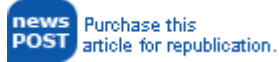
Travis Ho, 23, was also named IT Youth for showing entrepreneurship and leadership.



The NUS third-year student's childhood interest in video games paved the way into artificial intelligence (AI) and digital entertainment research later in his life.

His victory was a real-time strategy game – Teridian Shadow – which was among the 30 winning gaming entries shown at the prestigious 2002 Milia Game Developer Village in Cannes, France. The winners were selected out of 83 projects from 21 countries that year.

Travis continues to juggle schoolwork and what he calls "gamework". He has been a partner of local game development studio Envisage Reality for the last four years.



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