



**KEITH VANDER LINDEN**

Age: 38

Title: Professor of computer science, Calvin College

**Reason to Watch:** He's doing research into artificial intelligence, getting computers to think like humans. In work funded by the U.S. Office of Naval Research, Vander Linden is working in "computational linguistics," programming computers to convert complex schematic drawings into English instructions.



**RANDY BASSIN**

Age: 41

Title: Founder, Philanthrotech

**Reason to Watch:** With millions of tech-heads making gazillions on IPOs, Bassin is going in another direction: using technology to

help disadvantaged youth.

A year ago, he founded Philanthrotech to help high school kids get technologically up to speed. The organization also refurbishes old computers and donates them to low-income families.



**ROB MALDA**

Age: 23

Title: Founder of SlashDot.org: News for Nerds. Stuff that Matters.

**Reason to Watch:** Malda started his Web site two

years ago as a student at Hope College. This summer, he and his partner, Jeff Bates, sold it for \$5 million plus \$7 million in future stock considerations. Time magazine says SlashDot.org is at the forefront of "open source" journalism.



**AARON PLANTENGA**

Age: 19

Title: Webmaster for the Community Media Center

**Reason to Watch:** Sure, anybody can design a Web page — and plenty do. But the talented ones always surf right to the \$6K job at Major Cooperation dot com. Plantenga, a computer science sophomore at Grand Valley State University, has designed 20-some pages for nonprofits — and wants to keep doing it. "It's more to me than just making the money," he said.

# 10 to watch

Fast-changing technology is the perfect vehicle for youthful enthusiasm and innovation. Here are 10 young techies who have climbed aboard the cyberspace rocket and are piloting it into the 21st century.



**MAGGIE THELEN**

Age: 35

Title: Director of Technology for Rockford Public Schools

**Reason to watch:** She's showing teachers how to use the first converged school computer network in the nation at Rockford Schools. Honored as Michigan's outstanding technology-using educator in 1998, Thelen this year helped take her school into the next technological dimension. Starting this month, computers in every classroom will play videos, send and receive e-mail, act as telephones, link to the Internet and receive satellite programs and local television shows. Thelen's at the forefront of e-education.

**RACHEL LEEP**

Age: 18

Title: Musician

**Reason to Watch:** This Grand Rapids Christian High School student has started her own band, The Rachel Leep Band, created her own brand of music (what she calls natural rock), put out a CD that's drawn lots of attention and has played solo in front of a sold-out crowd of more than 1,000 people. Her marketing strategy embraces MP3 technology and the Internet. Sample her songs at IUMA.com.



**CHRIS BODEN**

Age: 24

Title: Founder, CEO and sole proprietor of the Geek Group

**Reason to Watch:** Like Mozart, it's all in his head. But Coopersville native Boden has big dreams he hopes someday will make beautiful music. He wants to fund and build a gathering place for Geeks, where they can toy with computers, fiddle with lasers and do the things Geeks do. One possible location: Grand Rapids' again-empty City Center. One possible problem: No money. Small matter, says Boden, of Kalamazoo. "I've got a great plan and a great dream and a wonderfully feasible idea." After all, the Geeks will inherit the earth.



**MOCHAN SHRESTHA**

Age: 21

Title: Webmaster for the Lanthorn, the Grand Valley State University student newspaper.

**Reason to Watch:** A native of Nepal attending GVSU on a scholarship, Shrestha is studying mathematics and computer science while maintaining the Lanthorn's online edition. He hopes to obtain his doctorate in math or computer science and land a job doing mathematical research.



**MIKE STRUYK**

Age: 21

Title: Systems engineer, Sun/Netscape Alliance

**Reason to watch:** Struyk is moving West Michigan companies into the information age. Starting with U.S. Signal when he was only 15, he then set up the computer system for his father's fledgling Tickets PLUS when he was 17 and developed the Internet service for West Michigan's newest phone company, USExchange, as soon as he graduated from Grand Rapids Christian High School in 1998. He's now analyzing needs and solving problems for West Michigan clients of the new Sun/Netscape Alliance.

**KEITH BROPHY**

Age: 37

Title: President and CEO of SageStone Consulting

**Reason to Watch:** A Sparta native, Brophy spent nine years in Washington, D.C., working for IBM Corp. But he came back with a goal to "live in West Michigan and do industry-leading work." Two years ago, Brophy bought out business partners in a software development company and founded SageStone. It's grown from six to 30 employees — and is poised to be even bigger in the next millennium.

