



4Frontiers interns research colonizing Mars

By Nomaan Merchant, Times Staff Writer
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John Truett, from left, Tara Allen and Alex Stimpson of 4Frontiers in New Port Richey research ways for humans to colonize Mars.

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NEW PORT RICHEY — In the summer, some college students work. Others volunteer, travel or take classes.

Graduate students Tara Allen, Alex Stimpson and John Truett took a different path. For the past two months, they've thought about how humans might live on Mars.

All three intern at 4Frontiers, a local company that focuses on settlement of the Red Planet.

"Mars has all the resources of a permanent destination," said company CEO Mark Homnick. "What you do when you get there is just as important as how you get there in the first place."

Inside 4Frontiers' one-story offices on Grand Boulevard, the three interns help Homnick and vice president Joseph Palaia IV with designs for a Mars settlement.

Allen, who graduated in May from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, uses a computer to design futuristic homes on the Red Planet, complete with couches, game systems and flat-screen TVs.

"You want it to have some luxury and amenities, but you don't want it to be too excessive," Allen said.

Stimpson and Truett, both 2007 graduates of the University of Florida, work on building a

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greenhouse fit for Mars.

"Our generation is saying, 'Yeah, going back to the moon is cool, but we've already been there,'" Stimpson said. "Let's take the next step."

On most days, the interns look like regular office employees. They type proposals and compile research from the Web, often collaborating with other unpaid interns throughout the world.

But the projects they pursue are anything but ordinary. One example is a 200-page pilot for a reality TV show titled *MarsBase1*.

The show — described as "Road Rules, but on Mars" by Allen — would feature teams dressed in spacesuits, competing in physical and mental challenges.

Stimpson and Truett wrote much of the pilot using research from NASA and other sources.

"It's mainly to generate public interest in the field," Truett said. "And ideally, a TV show could generate quite a bit of revenue for the actual building of stuff (on Mars)."

The interns are waiting to hear back from several TV people about the pilot.

As for the greenhouses, living spaces and other parts of the settlement they have designed, the interns acknowledge most of their work will never be used.

By the time humans reach Mars — a process that will take years, if not decades — new technology likely will have replaced what 4Frontiers has now.

But the interns, who return to graduate school this fall, hope their work this summer will influence future pioneers.

"Frankly, I would not want them to use exactly what we have," Stimpson said. "We're going to have better ways of doing exactly what we designed for now. ... Hopefully, some of the baseline work that we're doing will still be useful."

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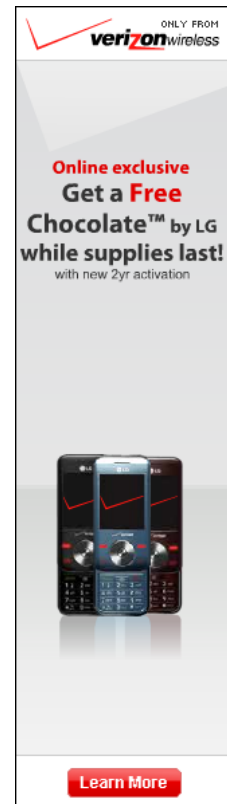
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