

Maraetai couple surprised winners of export award

Maraetai couple Grant and Denise Ford are still getting over the shock of winning a New Zealand Export Award.

The Fords will be familiar to viewers of television "infomercials" as the couple behind the Reading Master books, which aim at getting children reading before they reach school.

Grant and Denise run their business, The Parent Company, from their Maraetai home.

They were thrilled when they were nominated as a finalist in the Bank of New Zealand E Commerce Export Award category at last week's New Zealand Export Awards.

At the awards dinner, Grant was so convinced he and Denise had no show of winning that he tore up the brief acceptance speech notes he had scribbled on the back of a card.

A short time later Grant was ad-libbing the acceptance speech he thought he would never have to make.

The e commerce award was made to the company that best makes use of the internet as part of its business strategy.

Grant and Denise have started using the 'net to sell their educational materials.

"It's early days yet and the exciting thing for us is that we've been recognised so early in the piece for a website that's still very much under construction," says Grant.

He says the key to the export award success is the simplicity and user-friendly aspect of the website.

Ninety percent of The Parent Company products can be downloaded to the purchaser from the website.

"Transacting and receiving goods is just two clicks of the mouse away," says Grant.

The downloads are instantaneous using "install from the web" technology, once an on-line credit card transaction has been completed.

Once an animated book is downloaded, a re-ordering shell downloads with it providing a perpetual repeat business salesman for the company.

Meanwhile, the Reading Master books continue to show remarkable results in

developing reading skills in young children.

"Parents are the best first teachers of children and every child is capable of learning to read before they get to school.

"Reading Master empowers parents to teach their children," says Grant.

The programme is also starting to be used by schools. One recent success story is at Hunua School.

Principal David Foster called on The Parent Company to help a small group of students who were about two years behind their reading age.

With 30 minutes a day on the programme as part of their classroom activity, the group was reading at their age level within four months.

As a result of parent demand, the Fords are about to introduce a similar programme for mathematics.

"We've researched the maths for three years and everything we've learned has come together in this programme," says Grant.

"We're very excited about it."

The Ford's website is: readingmaster.com



Grant and Denise Ford with Rayo, their pet Rainbow Lorikeet, and the New Zealand Export Award.

Hearing considers village plan

Planning commissioners were this week due to hear submissions on the controversial Clevedon Retirement Village proposal.

Three days were set aside for the joint Manukau City Council/Auckland Regional Council hearing.

A total of 110 submissions opposed the original 1998 application. A revised submission has now been put forward advocating a similar size development, but lower density.

The original submissions still stand and, in addition, 21 further submissions have been received opposing the revised proposal - and one in support.

other facilities.

The consultant argues that:

- the effects of the development on the environment will be minor.
- adverse effects from stormwater discharge and effluent disposal will be minor.
- the development will be in

keeping with the character of Clevedon.

A large number of submitters are arguing otherwise and the decision rests with the two MCC and two ARC planning commissioners.

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