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Marconi's Jersey Shore think tank still striving

By MAUREEN
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Some endeavors are just too innately important to let fail. InfoAge, the Information Age Science-History Learning Center on the site of the former U.S. Army base known as Camp Evans, on Marconi Road, in Wall Township, has always struck me that way.

The late Ellis Gilliam — a great researcher and source for many visitors to the Asbury Park Library — and city resident Cindy Cisler took me out to Camp Evans for an event one year. I was amazed by the amount of pre- and post-WWII communications equipment and artifacts tucked away among the camp's towering pines. There is a distinctly informal, volunteer atmosphere at InfoAge. This emanates everywhere from the cheery men and women devoted to keeping the institution going to the center's persistent feel of fragility, so common to such community-waged efforts.

But recently, InfoAge got a much-needed infusion, the kind its volunteers couldn't contribute.

InfoAge board chair, Michael Ruane, and board vice-chair M. Claire French were presented with a check for \$25,000 from Tom Hayes and Kathy O'Connell of New Jersey Resources, an energy supplier to New Jersey and other states, and Canada.

In an e-mail to Asbury Radio, InfoAge founder and director, Fred Carl, told us, "This donation not only helps us from the money point of view, it is very encouraging to all of us volunteers from NJNG (NJ Natural Gas) and InfoAge who want to give Camp Evans a future in education that honors the service of those who graced the site in the past."

InfoAge is on the grounds of Guglielmo Marconi's original compound, a series of houses his crew built that are still standing, and open spaces where he once conducted his experiments.

An Italian-born inventor, Marconi won the Nobel Prize for his "contribution to the development of wireless technology."

He did much of his pioneering work in New Jersey.

Recently, Carl has been waging a grass-roots campaign to have Marconi added to the 2008 New Jersey Hall of Fame. Marconi is one of six nominees in the "Enterprise" category. "His induction would bring much needed exposure for InfoAge," says Carl.

The gas company's \$25,000 will go toward programs to stimulate interest among students in technology.

"With each dollar we receive," said Ruane, "we are closer to realizing our three missions: to develop an Interactive/Hands-on learning center, focused on the transmission, storage and processing of information; to inspire people — especially children — to learn and appreciate information technology and to improve their lives and employment opportunities; and to honor the accomplishments and service of Signal Corps veterans, military, civilians, and defense contractors, in the very same buildings where key military decisions and history were made."

At its busiest point, from 1941 until it closed in 1997, Camp Evans served about 3,000 men and women, military as well as civilian, whose purpose was to develop the cutting-edge technologies that saved countless lives through WWII, the Cold War and Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

According to Carl's research, one in every 10 information technology jobs in the U.S. goes unfilled.

"The materials, exhibits and programs at InfoAge will create an atmosphere of inspiration to motivate all ages and especially students to pursue employment in the rewarding fields of information technology."

Under current circumstances, supporting this effort might make excellent sense. Visit [www.Info](http://www.InfoAge.org)

[Age.org](http://www.InfoAge.org).

Asbury Park Press radio correspondent Maureen Nevin Duffy created and hosted "Asbury Radio — The Radio Voice of Asbury Park," a weekly public affairs talk show over WYGG, 88.1FM. It continues as a blog on AsburyRadio.com. Please send your comments and suggestions to AsburyRadio@aol.com or 3 Deal Lake Court, Asbury Park, NJ, 07712.
