# From "Whiz Kid" to "Web Brat"



Michelle "Chelle" Ellis, owner of Web Brats sits in her office which she has decorated in rich Moroccan colors as vivid and creative as the web design business she operates. Also pictured is her Yorkshire Terrier, Boudreaux.

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In the midst of a flamboyant, bohemian nook at 1669 Main St. (Stateline Road) Michelle "Chelle" Ellis, 35, waves her magic wand and creates the most unique, impressive web pages this side of the cosmos at her web page development company called Web Brats.

That magic wand involves a lot more than fairy dust; the artistic flair evolves from the analytical mind encased in the colorful aura of Chelle, a self-made computer programmer.

The seeds of Ellis' expertise were planted when she lived in Hawaii in 1997 where she had planned to work as a paralegal, but she said, "They didn't have a need for paralegals in Hawaii."

Feeling isolated from the rest of the world, Ellis hit the Internet and hooked up with friends Billie Stroope and Rachael Parker on AOL where they chatted about combined interests in computer technology. One conversation led to another, Ellis persevered, and said her friends got "real jobs" after three years at Web Brats.

Ellis, a Belhaven College history and art major said, "I learned computer programming on my own by working through small tutorials at Angelfire.com and then going on to programming books I bought."

Nine years ago, Ellis started Web Brats at her home in Southaven then expanded to the new location April 2006 with more space and a colorful environment created from collected abstract paintings, flowing vibrant Indian saris, fountains, candles, an 8 by 8 ft. heart-shaped box that houses purple lips on one wall and a Web Brat's logo that Ellis painted on another.

Although Ellis moved her business from home, the welcoming atmosphere at the new place has not lost that home-like, comfy charm that lures customers upon entering her domain.

Ellis caters mostly to commercial and non-profit organizations. Samples of her web pages can be viewed at www.webbrats.com. All web pages are custom-designed after Ellis gets to know her clients so she can "see their mind's eye

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and get what they're hoping for."

She also works with existing sites in which she said she works it so the client "won't be lost" when she is through making them more professional and accommodating.

"People want clicks and bricks," said Ellis, "a building (Web Brats), and the click is the website."

Design and development of a website can run anywhere from $950 and up. Ellis said, "It takes 10 hours to develop it and three times that long to code it and take pictures of the business or whatever they are selling to make it look professional." She works with clients, allowing three payments in thirds for the initial cost.

The least expensive web server space cost is $14.95 a month, which includes three email addresses that match the domain (presence on the web). The domain is $15 per year and paid to an Internet web registrar.

Having an Internet web page is worth it with Chelle Ellis at the reins. Her husband, Ken Ellis, an in-flight air traffic controller, has supported her passion for art by producing animations and using his photography skills when Chelle writes for *Desoto Magazine*, another creative channel through friend and publication owner, Dana Finimore.

Ellis said she planned to name the business Web Monsters because of Monster.com, but her mom, Ginger Welch, suggested Web Brats because she said, "Monsters are created, but brats are just born that way." So Web Brats was born.

Ellis has three "brats" whom she has not convinced to join the business yet: Clayton Jones, 16, a video game enthusiast, Ashley Ellis, 21, and Dustin Ellis, 23, whom she praised for having fine careers of their own, but if they ever want to be a Web Brat, they know where to come.