

# A tale of two worlds

## Marketing businesses through virtual reality is new trend when selling online

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**GREEN RIVER** — The new trend in virtual reality marketing was the subject of the Nov. 18 Green River Chamber of Commerce Lunch and Learn meeting.

### SECOND WORLD

Mark Atkinson, regional director of Small Business Development Center/Wyoming Entrepreneur.BIZ, said that according to the British Journal of Education and Technology, 80 percent of Internet users will have an avatar by the end of 2011. For those who do not know what an avatar is, it is a virtual image of yourself, which you use to browse a site such as Second Life. SBDC/Wyoming Entrepreneur.BIZ is using Second Life to develop a place to market Wyoming.

Atkinson said colleges, businesses and organizations are marketing their products and services using virtual reality. He said they

use virtual reality for business counsel, classes, Web services, international meetings and branding.

### POSSIBILITIES

Those wishing to begin exploring the virtual world should create an avatar.

In order to begin branding a business or setting up your own world, a person can begin by purchasing an island. With the aid of programmers, you can build what you want on the island. For example, Atkinson's site for marketing Wyoming includes Devils Tower, the Teton Mountains, and, locally, the Green River and the Wild Horse Loop Tour. Other businesses have developed virtual stores through which one can purchase an article of clothing for their avatar as well as the same item for themselves and have it delivered straight to the person's home.

Atkinson said your site could be either public or private. Other businesses use virtual re-

ality to save on the cost of travel and expenses for meetings. Businesses host both national and international meetings in the virtual world. Still others, such as colleges, even teach classes in the virtual world.

According to Atkinson, the entire University of Texas has announced a commitment to Second Life. They will offer accredited degrees online. In addition, law firms and counseling services as well as other types of business offer services in the virtual world.

### WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY

Atkinson reminded those in attendance about how far technology has come from the 1970s and 1980s with the introduction of Atari and then Nintendo. Today, people use virtual reality to do more than play games. They use it to teach, learn, research, communicate, and market.

### OTHER CHAMBER BUSINESS

The red carpet award winner for

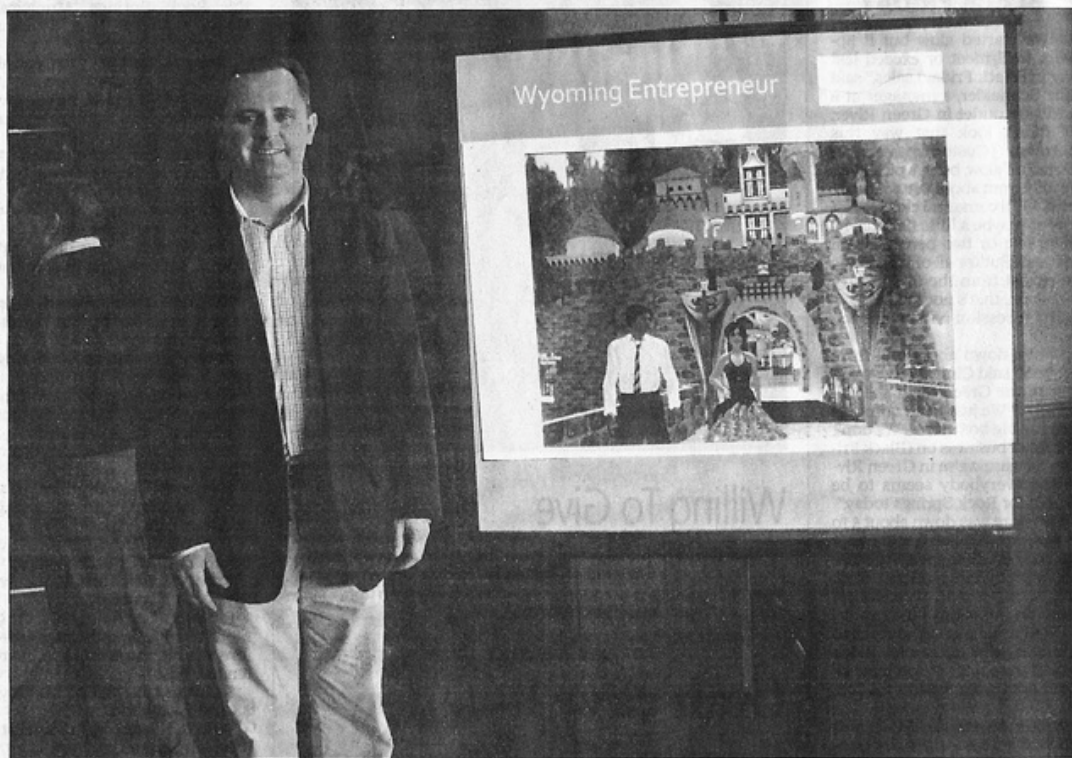
November was presented to Bonnie Bigolin of Print Link Ad-Specialties.

Green River Futures is hosting an open house at the Tomahawk building on December 2 at 5:30 p.m.

The Support Your Own, Spend At Home campaign is under way. The Green River Chamber of Commerce is focusing on heavy media coverage to encourage residents to shop at home. Logos for the campaign to display in windows and doors of businesses are available at the chamber office.

The Green River Chamber of Commerce Holiday Puzzle Hunt is also under way. From Nov. 21-Dec. 22, patrons are able to pick up a puzzle piece at 16 different merchants.

Once you have collected 15 of the 16 puzzle pieces, return them to the GRCC by Dec. 23 to receive a collectible, limited edition, porcelain ornament. Puzzle pieces are limited, so the GRCC recommends early participation.



Connie Wilcox-Timar/Rocket-Miner

**SHOWING THEIR AVATARS** — Mark Atkinson displays his and his wife's personal avatar during the Green River Chamber of Commerce Lunch and Learn. Use of avatars is a new trend when it comes to promoting businesses on-line.