

## Ambassador changing people's lives

Futureintech Ambassador Scott Abernethy, a software engineer from Harris Stratex, has been a powerful influence on the possible career paths of Information Technology students at Wellington High School.

Over the past two years, Scott has worked with students in Year 12 and 13 IT classes, explaining his job and helping them with projects.

Since Scott's involvement, students he has worked with have come third and fourth in the New Zealand Programming Contest, with one going on to compete in the International Olympiad in Informatics – the first time a New Zealand team has taken part.

Another student attained a Silver CREST award in ICT, while another was awarded a Massey Scholarship to study engineering.

According to Information Technology teacher Vincent Brannigan, Scott inspired the students he worked with and "made software engineering a real option for them".

"Many of last year's Year 13 students were very seriously considering ICT careers – at one point it was nine

out of ten in the class! When they meet someone who's working in the industry and talk to them they realise they are real people just like them, and maybe it's not that hard.

"It was the same reaction with my 2005 students, with whom Scott had a lot of contact.

"Last year we had university student mentors as well, and students identified with them too, and made a connection with people who were on the pathway to an ICT career."

As well as describing how he uses IT in his own work, Scott discussed code structuring and teamwork, and gave advice on Java programming.

"Lots of the kids don't plan code, or break it down into manageable chunks," says Brannigan.

"They just sit down and

write. Scott gets them to break it down. We teach them that, but when you get someone from industry telling them how it works in real life it really sinks in."

Scott says he has found the experience of being an Ambassador "really rewarding – especially after hearing these results; that makes it all worthwhile."

His employers at Harris Stratex have been extremely positive about his involvement with Futureintech, and have ensured that he has been able to take on the role without affecting his work.

"I'm surprised that it's had this much impact, but it really gives hope for the future. Hopefully this can happen again and again and again with future Ambassadors."

*Scott Abernethy (centre) and Vince Brannigan talk with a member of this year's Informatics team*

