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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

North Carolina Entrepreneur Starts High-Tech Business after High-Tech Layoff

(Valdese, NC) - A Valdese Engineer has created a website targeting robotics / electronics hobbyists and cost-conscious manufacturers - giving them access to affordable software, development systems and test equipment. The website, found at www.ElectronicBrains.com, was officially "opened for business" at the end of March, 2002.

ElectronicBrains.com gets its name from the ubiquitous microcontroller (the multi-legged chips that control everything from our car's engine performance to our washing machine's spin cycle). More and more devices have these embedded "electronic brains" today. Electronics enthusiasts and robotics hobbyists use microcontrollers in their projects, but developing the software requires specialized (and expensive) hardware. "You can do some limited development without this hardware, but if your design is very complicated, you're going to need two things - an ICE and a DSO," said the site's creator, Joseph Ellis.

An ICE is an In-Circuit Emulator, a device that plugs into the actual hardware being developed. "If you were the perfect programmer, you could simply write the software, program the chip, plug it into the circuit and be done. In my 18 years in the industry, I don't think I've ever gotten a program right the first try - and if I did, I would probably change my mind and want to add more features," Ellis said. "The emulator allows the programmer to make as many changes as needed, download and test it out - all in the matter of a few seconds."

A DSO, or Digital Storage Oscilloscope, is a type of test equipment that allows the designer to peer into the circuit and see what is going on. "Think of it as a heart monitor for a circuit board - or perhaps a brainwave monitor is a better analogy, since we're talking about electronic brains," joked Ellis. "Again, you can do this type of development without a DSO, but they sure make life a lot easier when you're trying to figure out if your problem is in hardware or software. Many DSOs get down to the nanosecond to allow you to catch that glitch that is playing havoc with your circuit," explained Ellis. "Some of the scopes I've sold originally cost over \$10,000 when new. Companies buy new equipment and the old stuff comes on the market at a good price. Even at a couple of thousand dollars, it is more money than most people are willing to risk - when they don't know what kind of condition the equipment is in. That's where I come in. I buy them, check them out and fix whatever needs fixing. The same holds true for the emulators, which can run from a few hundred to several thousand dollars when new," Ellis said.

Ellis, who was laid off from an Engineering job last July, now puts in a full work week doing Engineering for Stealth Laboratories, an electronics manufacturer in Hickory, NC. "My boss is an entrepreneur, himself, and fully supports this endeavor," added Ellis. "Stealth Labs is a growing business and will be needing more equipment as it grows. I've already been able to procure a great DSO for them."

ElectronicBrains.com will be adding to its product line on a weekly basis.
