Yeti Farm: Animation, job creation

By STEVE MacNAULL

Hapless monkeynauts and primate brothers Gus and Wally think they are on important space missions, but are really just causing intergalactic calamity.

"I told you this would sound weird and be the craziest interview," said Ashley Ramsay, the co-owner of Kelowna-based animation studio Yeti Farm Creative. "But the bottom line is we make fun stuff."

Gus and Wally are the cartoon stars of Rocket Monkeys, the animated series Yeti Farm makes in conjunction with Vancouver-based Atomic Cartoons for the Teletoon Network.

"We have 50 people working here in our studios in downtown Kelowna," said Ramsay, 35. "Yet most people don't even know we are here. But we're so proud to be in Kelowna and employing so many young and talented people. And we're only going to grow bigger."

Yeti Farm, named after that mythical mountain monster who also makes a great mascot, ended up in Kelowna when husband-and-wife team Todd and Ashley Ramsay decided to move here after a decade working for various studios in Vancouver.

Launching with the help of Accelerate Okanagan, Yeti Farm is now quite the operation. Todd is an animator and studio creative director and Ashley handles the business side of the company.

Yeti Farm is animating for numerous web, interactive and TV platforms. It puts together the online series, SnackTime, about talking foods that promote healthy eating.

Ashley Ramsay, co-owner of Kelowna-based animation studio Yeti Farm Creative.

It provides content and animation series for most of the video games that EA Sports produces, and it has its hand in seven animated TV series.

Yeti Farm produces Honkbarn, a musical program for preschool kids, for Treehouse Network.

And it also produces Operation Schnarg for kids aged 7 to 11, a series about two washed-up astronauts, Pogo and Stanley, and their chicken-friend Bok.

In conjunction with Atomic Cartoons, Yeti Farm provides animation series for five other TV shows.

Two can't be named yet and the other three are the aforementioned Rocket Monkeys, Pirate Express for Teletoon and I Can Dance for Knowledge Network.

Ramsay was nominated for The Daily Courier's Kelowna Top Forty Under 40 by Jon Summerland of the Okanagan Film Commission.

Yeti Farm has hired many arts graduates from Okanagan College and UBC Okanagan.

"We take amazing traditional artists and turn them into animators," she said. "But we never want them to forget their roots. We're always holding drawing classes."

Yeti Farm also develops and hires talent from other schools, even high schools, if the students have talent, shows promise and is passionate about learning animation.

Ramsay was also recently appointed to the B.C. Small Business Roundtable.