

"We only talked about it one time on our show, and then out of nowhere we had like 100 people following us," Staypuff said. Now they interact with listeners, post photos of the crowd during a live broadcast at Green Iguana or Shephard's Beach Resort, and take pictures of themselves when fans tweet to ask if it's really them.

Ratboy called their following an "ego boost" but added, "You feel more pressure to update it more often, 'cause you know people are looking and paying attention now."

People like Soulja Boy (@souljaboytellem), Dane Cook (@danecook) and Tony Danza (@tonydanza) have all responded to Rat and Puff's mass tweets, even though they don't know each other personally. And whenever a celebrity writes or follows them, it leads to even more followers.

Tweet and meet

Eventually, all this online interaction makes people want to meet in person. Last March, Carrico, the Web developer, attended his first Twitter meet-up, or "Tweetup." Owyang (@jowyang), the California Web strategist, had tweeted that he

was coming to Tampa and invited his local followers to have dinner with him in SoHo. About 18 people showed up that night, tweeting, blogging, texting and shooting video of the dinner. When Carrico realized how many like-minded techies lived in Tampa Bay, he founded tampabloggers.com to aggregate their Twitter feeds.

Since the dinner, Carrico has also organized informal Tweetups nearly every month. In December, 48 people squeezed into The Bunker coffee and wine bar in Ybor City.

"It was just packed," Carrico says of the small shop. "It looked like you walked into the most popular club on a Saturday night." He's held other gatherings at Starbucks,



Julia Gorzka (@JuliaGorzka) and Josh Carrico (@Sige-pJedi) organized the recent Tampa Tweetup. Yes, Carrico says, such gatherings can actually be productive.

Channelside and MOSI, which attracted his biggest turnout with 118 Tweepers. Tweetups are also a growing trend in Orlando and Sarasota.

It may seem pointless: a bunch of strangers getting together to ignore each other while they play with their gadgets. But Carrico says Tweetups can be productive. Participants bring laptops to share their Web sites and blogs. Some get job leads.

"I hate to use the term networking because we have the idea that it's just people handing out business cards," Carrico said. "It's not that at all."

Contributing: Luis Santana

celebs in cyberspace

The stars are all atwitter. Here are some of our faves.

Ashton Kutcher @aplusk

Political tirades, book recs, plugs for *True Beauty*, a birthday shout-out to Bruce Willis, a photo of Demi Moore's bum. You'll find it all here.

Rainn Wilson @rainnwilson

To keep us laughing between episodes of *The Office*, the actor doles out hilarious tidbits all week long.

Jordin Sparks @therealjordin

*Tbt** photog Luis Santana helped the *American Idol* winner set up a Twitter account when she was in town for the Super Bowl. Now she sends out messages on everything from her dog to her famous friends.

Taylor Swift @taylorswift13

The country starlet tweets about her recording sessions and whirlwind schedule, including a shout-out to Plant City

when she headed to town for the Strawberry Festival.

Perez Hilton @perezhilton

The gossipmonger shows love for his favorite celebs and sends out zingers aimed at the rest.

George Stephanopoulos @gstephanopoulos

The *This Week* host took flak for interviewing Sen. John McCain via Twitter earlier this month.

Shaquille O'Neal @the_real_shaq

Food is a favorite topic for this baller, who tweets about Taco Bell commercials, his pre-game salads and his cravings for Dairy Queen.

Lance Armstrong @lancearmstrong

The seven-time Tour de France winner/cancer survivor/superhuman shares his favorite products (Nutella, anyone?), clears up rumors and updates the world on his broken collarbone.

tampa bay tweets

Follow these interesting Twitter feeds from local users.



Name: bn9

Bio: Get the latest headlines every 10 minutes or so from Bay News 9.

Sample tweet: "Accused baby abductor being held on \$750,000 bond <http://bn9.com/tw/?452501>"

312
following

434
followers

2,612*
updates



Name: genitorturers

Bio: Gen, the front woman for the shock-rock band Genitorturers, rants and raves.

Sample tweet: "watching for 1st time a travesty called american idol, secure that my life has been better for not experiencing this horrorshow thus prior!"

97
following

431
followers

291
updates



Name: charlestrippy

Bio: The recent USF grad and Web reality star Charles Trippy makes zany YouTube videos and posts the links on Twitter.

Sample tweet: "ever wonder what dog treats tasted like? well, so did i... <http://tinyurl.com/cxafbz>"

859
following

22,974
followers

1,939
updates



Name: drmommy

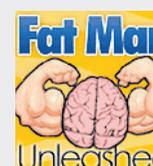
Bio: Former chiropractor Daisy Sutherland home-schools her five kids and still finds time to offer encouragement and parenting tips.

Sample tweet: "Do you have a teen at home who doesn't like to read? Here are some tips: <http://tinyurl.com/dctmrj>"

4,553
following

5,533
followers

11,206
updates



Name: israelagares

Bio: Israel Lagares' tag line says it all: "Just a fat man trying to get healthy."

Sample tweet: "Went to Clearwater Beach and ran sprints up a sand hill. I was dying!!!"

355
following

528
followers

1,027
updates

*as of Thursday afternoon