

Community

E-Cities of Lake County holds Entrepreneurship Competition

Freshman wins with enthusiastic presentation and useful product

by **BUD MARTELLO**

PAINESVILLE - The new auditorium at Painesville Harvey High School's new building was the venue for the second annual Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Northeast Ohio (BBBSNEO) entrepreneurship finals May 12.

The Big Brothers/Big Sisters organization of Lake County sponsors the E-City Lake County Business Plan Competition where 15 students, ranging from freshmen to seniors participate in the creation of their own business, mentored by local business people. This semester-long program, taught by business teacher Nell Rappaport, encourages the students to choose a business of their own creation, develop a business plan, including a marketing strategy, work out costing and pricing and ultimately development of their long term life goals.

Four of the 15 were selected through preliminary competitions to present their business to a panel of four judges at the competition. The judges were Brendan Baker, business writer; Dale Stephanic, business talk radio personality; Kathy Hartman-Frisby, founder and now retired owner of Hartman Personnel; and Ambrose Jackson, program

manager of the Ashtabula County Medical Center. The program supports the mission of BBBSNEO which is to help children reach their potential through professionally supported one-on-one relationships that have measurable impact.

The four finalists included Chrissa Stewart, founder and owner of Serenity at Home, with a candle and bath spa products designed to reduce stress. Stewart was mentored by Craig Hupp (Lubrizol). Sara Sertich created Sarah's Cozies, a line of handmade blankets targeted for pet markets and baby shower gifts. Her mentor was Mary Jane Sanders (Lubrizol).

Christopher Winfield's RedX Belt product line is prime leather belts whose buckles are nickel free, developed because his own allergy to nickel. He was mentored by Barry Deming (Deming Enterprises).

Tino Vargas, a 4.0 student athlete, whose company, Collars4Hope produces and sells collars and leashes for dogs, and soon cats, was mentored by David Fryauff (First Select Employee Screening). A portion of his profits will be donated to the Lake Humane Society.

Winning the top prize of \$300 was Winfield, second was Sirtich, who won \$200. Both the top finishers advance to the Cleveland City competition to be held at Cleveland State in August. Stewart came in third and Vargas was fourth, both garnering a \$100 prize for their

efforts.

Winfield's presentation, with Power Point slides, convinced the judges that his business plan, predicated on selling to a unique market niche, people who need belts with interesting buckles, but are sensitive to nickel, that he is a young man who will go places. His business plan had a complete manufacturing specification and quality control manual. Winfield now moves on to the city of Cleveland E-Cities competition.

Other E-City student participants this semester were Marissa Clark, a Harvey senior mentored by Marcia Winfield (California Imports); freshman Sedale James, mentored by Nate Bell (Zito Insurance); Tyler Kelly, a junior, mentored by Tony Brooks (TERKK Computer Services); Kendra Mackey, also a junior, mentored by Scott Sofer (Baron Hydraulics); senior Devonte Martin-Rouse, mentored by John Shiffler (Shiffler Equipment Sales); Brittany Marvin, a junior, mentored by Jerie Green (Lake-network.net); sophomore Andrew McNamee, mentored by Tom Szabo (A Thomas Image); freshman David Shupp, mentored by Tony Gagliardi (STP Manufacturing); senior Chealsie Townsend, mentored by Gladys Reilly (VIVA Spanish Language); David Venson, mentored by Angelo Cicconetti (Lubrizol); and junior Keenan Wright, mentored by John Powell (State Farm).



PHOTOS BY BUD MARTELLO

Prior to her E-City presentation, finalist Chrissa Stewart demonstrates her candles and spa products.



Executive Director of Big Brothers/Big Sisters Northeast Ohio Tim Kehres introduces the E-City student presenters.



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Tino Vargas, a senior who plans to enter the school of Veterinary Medicine at Ohio University next fall, shows his product line of dog collars and leashes. A portion of his profits are being donated to the Lake County Humane Society.



Student Sara Sertich shows her "Cozie's" before her presentation, which garnered second place in the BBBSNEO entrepreneurship competition.



Harvey High School freshman Chris Winfield does a table top demonstration of his product prior to his award winning presentation at the E-City finals.