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Starting young: At 17, Honeoye Falls entrepreneur becomes a CEO

TERRICHA BRADLEY • STAFF WRITER • JULY 21, 2008

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Kristina Chartrand likes to meet her friends in the coffee shop, but it's not just for the java.

The young entrepreneur is busy planning the launch of a new Web site, and she works from her bedroom and coffee shops to organize the business. At 17, Chartrand is chief executive officer of Teens Night Out, a Web site for Rochester teens to find fun things to do -- and create their own events calendars.

"This is a Web site for teens 12 to 19 years-old to know what's going on in volunteerism, clubs, high school sporting events and concerts," said Chartrand.

It all started last year, when the Honeoye Falls-Lima High School senior applied to the 2007-2008 Young

Entrepreneurs Academy, a program that teaches middle and high school students how to start and run a real business. It's a partnership between the University of Rochester and State University of New York Geneseo.

Chartrand had won a need and merit-based scholarship. She worked on her marketing plan -- and how to successfully pitch her business to investors.

At SUNY Geneseo, Chartrand and her friends from school—Emily Alati, 17, and Chloe Clark, 17—became business partners and teamed up with Kevin Lin, 18, a graduate of Geneseo High School.

They attended class just about every Wednesday since October for four hours and spent extra time at their homes and local coffee shops, perfecting the Web site design and promotions for advertisers.

The team presented a budget this year, seeking \$1,500, but they got more than that. Local businesses and investors gave them \$2,525, exceeding Chartrand's expectations.

"We have a pretty good amount of money to get a programmer (for coding and links)," Chartrand said. "Cards, flyers and brochures were made by volunteers and the business partners will pitch in money."

The Web site is in the process of being programmed and Chartrand expects the site to be open to the public by Aug. 31. The link, www.teensnightout.com, will not go live until work is finished.

Her mother, Deborah Chartrand, 46, is impressed with how the program has given Kristina confidence in her abilities.



Kristina Chartrand, of Honeoye Falls, works from her bedroom on a new Web site for teens. (Diego James Robles)

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"It would be nice for teens to go online and find something to do together -- without getting in trouble," she said.

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