

**MPN**now.com

The leading news source in suburban Rochester and the Finger Lakes.

## Daily Messenger

By Kathryn Rybczak

May 28, 2009



### Product development: It's not child's play

Rochester, N.Y. — He may be just 12 years old, but he has six knitters working for his handmade sweater business and a Web site complete with an adorable baby in a hoodie made of alpaca fleece.

David Buchanan has been busy since convincing a panel of investors with the Young Entrepreneurs Academy in February to grant him some start-up money.

David was among 34 students from Monroe and Ontario counties who showcased their products to the community at a trade show last night.

"This is great for the students because this is a platform for them," said Valerie Alhart, director of marketing for the Young Entrepreneurs Academy. "They are not just advertising their products but themselves."

Young Entrepreneurs is a year-long program established in 2004 through the University of Rochester for middle and high school students to recognize the power of their business ideas and develop the skills necessary to turn those ideas into meaningful enterprises.

Students were chosen through an application process which included an essay on various topics having to do with their entrepreneurial skills.

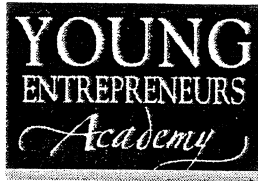
In March — after preparing for 19 weeks — the students each made a presentation about their business ideas, pitching it to investors with the hopes of receiving funding from them.

The trade show, held at Wilson Commons at the University of Rochester, was a way to show what progress had been made since those presentations and additional funds from investors.

"I have set up a Web site showing pictures of baby sweaters and people can order them," said

David, a home-schooled Victor student. "Right now I am only selling baby sweaters but hope in the next couple of weeks to sell hats and scarves."

David was awarded \$800 and \$600 of in-kind services from his March presentation. The sweaters sell for around \$50 to \$70



with about \$11 in ground shipping.

“When someone orders a sweater, it is sent from Peru, where I have about five or six people knitting them,” he said. “We buy the fur from farmers in advance to have the products in stock.”

His business plan would also give about \$900 to \$1,000 a year to charity, in his case, a maternal health care center his uncle established in Peru.

At this point, David hopes to sell a lot of his products at a Canandaigua fair in December. To visit his Web site, log on to: [www.felizcreations.com](http://www.felizcreations.com).

The product, “Flawless Fingers,” a tube that held both nail polish and remover hit a snag after entrepreneurs Jillian Broderick, a sixth-grader at Canandaigua Middle School, and Zainab Bakrin a seventh-grader at Twelve Corners Middle School in Brighton, fell short of funding to establish a manufacturer for their product.

“We needed \$900 to get a manufacturer,” said 11-year-old Jillian. “We only received \$250 from our presentation,” in addition to \$500 of in-kind services.

Since then, the duo has talked with their YEA teachers to find a manufacturer that will fit their budget.

“Once we get a manufacturer, we can begin to sell the product in local boutiques,” said Zainab, 13.

Canandaigua Academy sophomore Nikole Blowers showcased her cooking show, “Cooking with Me, Kole Lee,” which focuses on helping college students find healthier foods to eat and cook.

She received \$1,550 and \$1,700 of in-kind services from investors and plans to promote her cooking show — which she taped in April — in New York City this summer.

Throughout the process, Jillian said she realized that it takes a lot of hard work and dedication.

Alhart said that is the point of the program.

“It’s not just about making a product,” she said. “It is to establish the entrepreneurial mindset, skills and spirit to move forward with their business ideas or future business ideas.”