

Lake Zurich Daily Herald

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By Phil Collins
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Lake Zurich teen creates safe motorized skateboard

Matt Brazeau's hobby is rolling toward becoming a business at a swift 30 mph. The Lake Zurich High School senior will present his business plan for safe electric skateboards at a national competition in Rochester, N.Y., on Friday.

Brazeau, 17, is one of six students competing in the YEA! Saunders Scholars Bright Ideas Business Competition, chosen from 67 students participating in the Young Entrepreneurs Academy across the country.

He started building electric skateboards at age 11, but finding a way to make the boards safe was a new challenge. Brazeau said riders can reach speeds higher than 30 mph.

His business, iBraz Motors, was given \$1,500 by a panel of investors, funded through a grant from Ela Township. The money came with a stipulation.

"When I did my presentation, I wanted to get money for marketing but when they came back and gave me money from the grant they told me they wanted me to use the money to create a safe electric skateboard," Brazeau said.

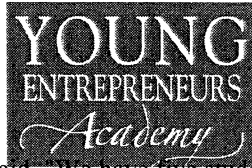
It took some brainstorming to reconcile the terms "safe" and "electric skateboard." His first idea was to develop the proper padding for a rider to wear.

"To me, that doesn't make much sense ... a small percentage of people actually wear the padding," Brazeau said.

So he switched gears to think about making the board itself a safe vehicle instead of leaving it up to the rider to take precautions.

He has come up with something that will do the job, but cannot divulge much information about it because he plans to patent the board. He is readying prototypes to use in his presentation in New York this week.

Dale Perrin, executive director of the Lake Zurich Area Chamber of Commerce, said the YEA! program has been valuable for business-minded students.



"It's been a fabulous thing for the students," Perrin said. "We have five students who are starting four businesses."

The competition, at the Rochester Institute of Technology, awards scholarships to the top three presenters, with first place taking \$10,000.

Next year Brazeau plans to study mechanical engineering at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. The future of iBraz

Motors remains up in the air.

"I'm waiting to see what happens with all this," he said.