

Young Entrepreneurs Academy

MOLDING THE MINDS OF TOMORROW'S CEOS



Back: Gayle Jagel (YEA! Founder & Executive Director), David Mammano (CEO of nextSTEP Publishing and Instructor of YEA! Class 2008), Carly Vandergriff
Front: Kristina Chartrand, Ani Patel, Kerry Huang, Neil Allen

By Valerie Weber Alhart

"I was 12 years old the first time I pitched my business idea to investors," is not a phrase you would expect to hear from a middle school student. In the Rochester area, it is more common than you would think. Thanks to the Young Entrepreneurs Academy, or YEA!, participating students are encouraged to become the next generation of CEO's – before they even finish high school. To date, the groundbreaking nine-month program (started at the University of Rochester) has guided 106 students over four academic years in launching 48 unique, small businesses.

What is YEA?

YEA! teaches students in grades 6-12 the process by which one establishes a real business enterprise or social movement. "Not only do you gain personally from it, but when people hear that you actually participated in the Young Entrepreneurs Academy and you started your own business at a really early age, they're generally impressed," says Habibe Hakiqi, YEA!

graduate and co-founder of Bubble Tea Mania. Habibe was 17 years old when she joined the program in 2005, and launched her business during her senior year at Brighton High School.

This is how the program works: it begins with motivated, enthusiastic and creative students, who think they have what it takes to start their own business. YEA! teaches them to recognize the power of their ideas and develop the skills necessary to turn those ideas into meaningful enterprises. "No prior business experience is necessary", says Gayle Jagel, the CEO and Founder of Young Entrepreneurs Academy, or YEA!. "Our goal is to encourage and nurture students interested in becoming entrepreneurs; enabling them to pursue their dreams by harnessing their creativity and energy." Jagel has more than 10 years of experience fostering entrepreneurship in Rochester area youth and also serves as the Director of the Office of Special Programs at UR while overseeing the development of YEA!

Inspiration is the Key

Gayle says she was struck by inspiration 12 years ago when her then 8-year-old daughter Meredith told her she wanted to start her own business. After hitting the local library and several bookstores looking for something to help guide her through the process Gayle came up empty handed. She decided to craft her own tutorial to assist her daughter's entrepreneurial desire – which was to launch Barks and Bubbles (a small pet grooming enterprise). Gayle walked her daughter through the planning process, and helped her see how to start the business. They started the business together, gathering supplies and putting out flyers in the neighborhood. According to Gayle, what began as her daughter's 'pet project' turned out to be so much more. "I was amazed that at such a young age she could understand concepts like return on investment, marketing, target audience and cost of goods sold. And not only could she understand the concepts but she could implement them!" Barks and Bubbles stayed in business for about a year but the idea behind it lingered long after when Meredith's friends began approaching Gayle asking her to help them start their own businesses. Fast-forward to 2003, when a dean at the University of Rochester approached Gayle wanting to know if she had any ideas in terms of creating an

"It's an amazing opportunity for the students, but also for us, for other entrepreneurs to be able to share our knowledge," says David Mammano, CEO of nextSTEP Publishing.

entrepreneurial-based program to be run out of UR's Office of Special Programs. The dean was in the process of applying for a grant from the Kaufman Foundation, an organization created to advance entrepreneurship and improve the education of children and youth, and he was aware of her entrepreneurial history and her work helping to encourage young students to create their own enterprises.

Gayle then turned her passion and expertise into a nine-month curriculum and experiential based program known as the Young Entrepreneurs Academy. "What makes this experience so incredible for

me" she says, "is that I was able to recognize what I love to do, and what I am passionate about, and I now get to help foster that same concept and the entrepreneurial spirit in young students with YEA! When participants are able to find something they love and that they are good at, it moves the bar in terms of their self-confidence, their self-esteem, and helps them realize they can accomplish just about anything."

Real-life Experiences

Students accepted into YEA! are taught to write a business plan, make a pitch to potential investors, obtain funding, register with governmental agencies and actually launch their company or social movement. All of the learning is real, experiential and takes place after school for three hours a week over the course of an academic year. "They get their DBA and actually present their concepts to a real investor panel, so they get real experience, and you can't get much more practical than actually doing it," says David Mammano, CEO of nextSTEP Publishing and the instructor of



Eric at the Investor Panel with Ron Knight, Life Trustee, University of Rochester



Kerry (right) with her business partners at the YEA! Trade Show

The Greatest Picture in the History of Entertainment at The Little!



Don't miss this family favorite presented by Time Warner Cable & Turner Classic Movies

Special guest Dresden Engle from the George Eastman House will share secrets about the film!

Dorothy will be there too so bring your camera!

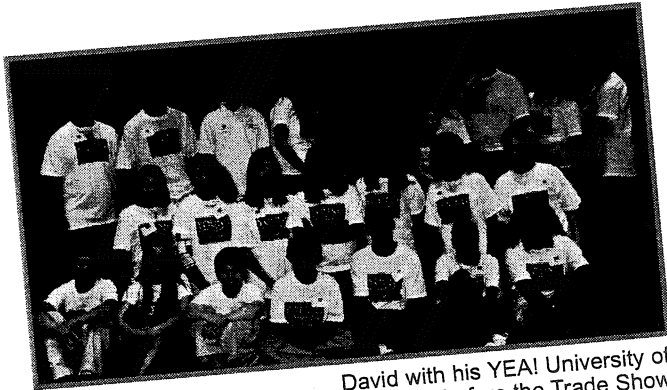
The Preferred Care
LITTLE BUDDIES
Family movie series at THE LITTLE

Saturday
04 25
10am
All tickets \$5

LITTLE

Preferred care AND RGE Genesee Valley Parent WARM 101.3 Continuous Soft Rock

240 East Avenue Rochester, N.Y. 14604 • 258-0400 www.thelittle.org



David with his YEA! University of Rochester Students before the Trade Show

the Young Entrepreneurs Academy class of 2008 at UR.

Students don't think of the nine-month commitment as a burden: "I actually think it might be helpful to make the program longer," says Kerry Huang, a 2008 graduate of the program which is currently in the midst of launching Scentsations, a retail company that creates and sells pendants you can fill with perfume. With David Mamanno's help and support, 14-year-old Kerry and her two partners learned how to approach and maintain a relationship with the overseas manufacturer who creates the product. He also helped them set up a company website, www.scentsationsjewelry.com.

Community is the Key Ingredient

The relationship the program has with the Rochester community is an important part of what makes it so successful. YEA! works in cooperation with local business leaders and their organizations to make sure the students get an up-close and in-depth look inside several areas of business, and actually get to meet and bounce ideas off of leaders of industry. Every year the class instructor is a different local entrepreneur and guest lecturers act as business mentors to the students. "It's an amazing opportunity for the students, but also for us, for other entrepreneurs to be able to share our knowl-

edge," says David Mammano, who is still in regular contact with many members of last year's class. The students are also given the opportunity to shadow business leaders in the community and are introduced to graphic designers, attorneys, accountants – anyone and everyone who can help while they are setting up their ventures.

Opportunity to Achieve Success

Although YEA! is about completing the task at hand – launching a new enterprise, in reality it is about much more. "What it provides is a foundational understanding and most importantly, a belief that there is an opportunity to become an entrepreneur," says David Koretz, President and CEO of BlueTie Inc., a web-based applications service provider. Having started his first business at the age of 14 and founding BlueTie by the time he was 21, Koretz shows students that age is really just a number. With the help of mentors like him and David Mamanno, YEA! is able to teach its students entrepreneurial skills before they enter college. This allows them to start to develop an entrepreneurial mindset that will in turn help them achieve success in and bring innovations to all of their future endeavors. "I believe the program works on a lot of different skills for them that ultimately, whether they end up in business or not, will help them be leaders in whatever they choose to do (in life)," says Helen Miller, owner of the Scott Miller Salon and Spa. In years past, Helen and her husband have told their own entrepreneurial story to the students, and taught them the importance of personal style and presentation skills, helping the students prepare to pitch their concepts and business ideas to the public.

Preparing for the Future

Along with an end-of-the-year formal graduation ceremony and trade show (where students sell their products and services to the public for the first time) the investor panel is perhaps the most significant part of the program. "While the

Maria Aslani-Breit, DDS

Diplomate American Board of Pediatric Dentistry

Pediatric Dentistry

Practice Limited to Infants, Children,
Adolescents & Children with Special Needs

Treatment Options with Sedation or General Anesthesia

New Patients Welcome
Most Insurances Accepted

1655 Elmwood Ave., Suite 120

427-8620

Lockwood Psychological Services, P.C.

MARCY A. BUSH, Ph.D.
CAROL I. REINHARDT, Ph.D.

Licensed Clinical Psychologists
Children • Adolescents • Families
Adult • Couples

Depression • Anxiety • ADHD • PTSD
Psychological testing • Divorce
Sex abuse survivors • Parent counseling
Infant and toddler assessments
Stress Management • Marital conflict

MOST INSURANCES ACCEPTED

383-0030

1 Lockwood Drive, Suite 100,
Pittsford

Easily accessible from I-490 at Rt 96 in
Bushnell's Basin