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Brighton-Pittsford Post

By Dan Goldman

May 8, 2009



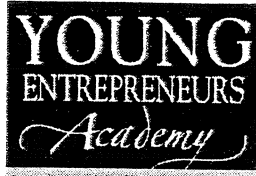
Pittsford student creates board game

Pittsford, N.Y. — A pair of shelves in Robert Moon's room are stocked with his favorite board games. The 12-year-old has all of the classics — Life, Operation and Clue.

Now Robert is hoping his own board game will join those on his and other board game lovers' shelves someday.

"I've always enjoyed board games," said Robert, the son of Richard and Kathleen Moon. "I also like math. Math is like lots of puzzles."

The Calkins Road Middle School seventh-grader started his own company, The Alert Mind, and created Grid Greed — a math board game — through classes with the Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) at the University of Rochester that started in September.



Students could start any business they liked, but Robert chose the math board game. The idea came out of an assignment to create a board game in Ann Shelp's math class last year. However, making a marketable and playable game is harder than it sounds.

"We have been looking at a lot of articles online from people who have experience making board games," Robert said. "One of the first things they tell us to do is give up our day job, because it's going to be really hard."

Of course, that's not an option for a middle school student.

The YEA! program is for students between the ages of 11 and 17, and Robert was in the same classes as some high school seniors. He said he learned a lot from YEA! and was impressed by the work of his fellow young entrepreneurs.

Robert played the game with family and friends, making improvements and new prototypes of Grid Greed. He has also received support from math teacher Marilyn Mossien and science teacher Richard Cowen, as well as school Principal Scott Reinhart.

One challenge is that the current prototype uses magnets to hold the pieces in place, but there are new laws in place banning magnets in toys.

Robert consulted with his grandfather and former entrepreneur, Dick Moon, who flew in from Buckinghamshire, United Kingdom, on Friday. Dick Moon ran a newspaper distribution business and invented products to make the industry more efficient.

"I didn't have a head like his when I was his age," Dick Moon said. "I was far from inventing things at the age of 12.

"I've got great admiration for what he has done and the way he is putting it across as well," he added. "He's got a sound business head."

All YEA! participants made a presentation to an investor panel in March, and Robert received \$3,800 in investment money and in-kind services or consulting from successful people in the business world. The other half of the cost to make the game will come from his family.

He plans to produce 100 copies of the game this fall.

"My plan is to sell to math teachers in greater Rochester, and possibly because I am also a citizen in the United Kingdom, and I have family members living there, I could try to sell Grid Greed to schools in England," Robert said.

Robert represented all of the students at the University of Rochester's YEA! program at the YEA! Saunders Scholars Bright Ideas Regional Business Competition at Rochester Institute of Technology on Friday, May 1. Despite being the youngest of the seven competitors and five years away from finishing high school, he took second place and received a \$24,000 scholarship to RIT.

The YEA! program concludes in June, but that doesn't end the businesses. Robert can run the business on his own, and he is already thinking about the future of The Alert Mind company.

"Hopefully this business will still be running and successful," Robert said. "The name, The Alert Mind, I chose it partly because it can be used for anything."