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## Schroeder seniors share peace with each jewelry piece

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**Messenger Post**

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Webster, N.Y. —

Be Irie is a business that creates handmade hemp bracelets and necklaces and donates proceeds to support education in Jamaica.

The business began in the Young Entrepreneurs Academy program at Webster Schroeder High School in the fall of 2010. Seniors Leah Doerner, Karlene Gallese, and Marissa Verdi teamed up to pursue their passions for creativity and helping others. They sell their jewelry at local craft shows and at school during lunch periods. Seventy-five percent of their profits are donated to Praying Pelican Missions with designation to be used in education ministries in Jamaica.

Leah traveled to Jamaica with Praying Pelicans in the summer of 2009 and the place holds a special place in her heart. When presented with the opportunity to give back to the community that she fell in love with, she took advantage right away and her friends jumped on board as well. Along with making all of the jewelry for Be Irie, the girls also had to create a business plan, prepare financial tables, and write a presentation to give before a panel of investors. At the Webster YEA investor panel, Be Irie was awarded \$1,325 and selected as a semi-finalist for the YEA RIT Saunder's Scholarship Competition.

On May 5, the girls traveled to RIT to compete against the 17 other semi-finalist business groups. Be Irie was selected as a top five finalist and competed once again at RIT on May 6. Although they did not place in the final round, the girls had the opportunity to present their business to many Rochester area professionals and received positive feedback and encouragement to continue their efforts.

Be Irie will be at the YEA trade show at Eastview mall on Saturday, June 4 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Eastview Mall.

Irie is rastafarian for being at peace, or being totally happy.

### More about the owners, Leah Doerner, Karlene Gallese and Marissa Verdi

Age: Leah, 18, Karlene, 18, Marissa, 17

Years in business: Since April 2011

Hometown: Webster, NY

Family: Leah lives with her mother, Lisa, father, Mike, and 15 year old brother Paul. Karlene lives her mother, Maria, father, Frank, sister Gianna (15) and brother Carmen (11). Marissa lives with her mother, Rosalie, father, Steven, grandmother, Mary, and sister Dianne (21).

Hobbies:

Leah enjoys dancing at Spins dance studio in Penfield, serving as Class President at Webster Schroeder, and working as a lifeguard at the Eastside YMCA. Marissa likes to knit and works at Bill Gray's. She plays string bass in the school orchestra and plays field hockey. Karlene is a frequent concert goer, enjoys working as a lifeguard at the Eastside YMCA, and loves being a summer camp counselor at Camp Stella Maris. She also has a passion for coffee.

### More about Be Irie

Check out **Be Irie on Facebook**, @BeIrieJewelry on Twitter, email: [beiriejewelry\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:beiriejewelry[at]gmail.com)

### In three sentences, tell us how you ended up in this line of work.

Our business began in the Young Entrepreneurs Academy at Webster Schroeder High School. We all shared a passion for helping others and being crafty. Be Irie was created as a way to use our skill of making jewelry in order to benefit those less fortunate than ourselves.

### What are two memories from your career that stick with you the most?

The success that we experienced at our first craft show gave us the confidence to continue and showed us that our business truly had potential. We were able to sell over 50 items at this first show. Our second most memorable moment was when Be Irie was called as a finalist in the YEA RIT Saunder's Scholarship competition. We never even expected to move past the Webster

Investor Panel, but finding out that we were in the top 5 out of all the YEA businesses showed us that other people really believed in us as well.

**What you most like and least like about your work?**

We love being able to make our jewelry in order to benefit a cause we believe in, but we under estimated the time involved in starting a business and we've learned that we have to make sacrifices in order to find success.

**What makes your business unusual?**

Be Irie is unique because it is owned by high school seniors who turned their passion for hemp jewelry into a profit making business that gives back by donating profits to help support schools in Jamaica.

**What advice do you have for someone who wants to open a business?**

Have a clear plan and goals for yourself. Expect to spend almost all of your free time on your business and be sure to take advantage of all of the opportunities before you. Striving to meet your goals is a great way to measure your progress.

— Amanda Seef

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