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Webster teens start healthy eating, cooking business

The young entrepreneurs aim to teach peers to cook, eat nutritiously

SAL MAIORANA • STAFF WRITER • APRIL 8, 2008

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All Jordan White has to do is look around the lunchroom at Webster Thomas High School to recognize that the eating habits of America's youths leave a lot to be desired.

So the 16-year-old sophomore has decided to parlay his love of cooking into a new business venture that he hopes will help students improve their diets and, ultimately, their health.

White is a member of the Young Entrepreneurs Academy, a program offered by the University of Rochester to teach students in grades six through 12 how to start their own businesses — then actually develop and operate them.

White and his YEA partner, Mackenzie Malia, a 15-year-old home-schooled student from Fairport, have created a business called Garnished Infusion whose mission statement is "to open the eyes of young adults to the healthy side of the culinary world, and teach them the skills to prepare them for future years. This will allow them to be more self-reliant, and educated on healthy eating."

"We both enjoy cooking, and we both feel that teenagers need a nutritional diet to stay healthy," Jordan said.

"Obesity and food disorders in teens are very common, so we're trying to teach kids how to eat healthier."

The business plan calls for Jordan and Mackenzie to teach classes using kitchen space at a meal-preparation franchise in Webster called Make & Take Gourmet, where clients reserve time to make their own home-cooked meals.

Jordan and Mackenzie, using \$1,700 in startup money they received after presenting their plan to an investor panel, will provide the cooking ingredients, utensils and recipes, and their clients will learn to prepare their own meals.

"I think it's a super idea," said David Mammano, owner of NextStep Magazine who teaches in the YEA program for three hours every Tuesday during the school year.

"Teenager eating habits are terrible, with all the fast food they eat, and a lot of teens don't know the first thing about cooking a meal."

Most teens don't know the first thing about starting and running businesses, either, but the YEA program is out to change that.

It began as a pilot program in 2004 at the University of Rochester, and a second program began at the State University College at Geneseo in 2007. The goal of YEA is to help students develop entrepreneurial skills that will enable them to plan and launch their own enterprises.

According to its Web site, the local YEA program produced 63 graduates who have started 29 businesses and social movements in 2004 through 2007, and Mackenzie believes she and Jordan will join that list because their potential client base is so large.

"I think there will be kids who are interested in cooking who don't want to depend on adults or their parents to cook for them, and maybe some kids want a new hobby.

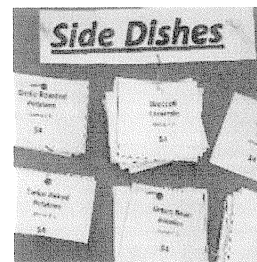
"And then there will be kids who want to eat healthy," she said.

And regardless of what level of success Garnished Infusion reaches, Mackenzie and Jordan have a great start on their



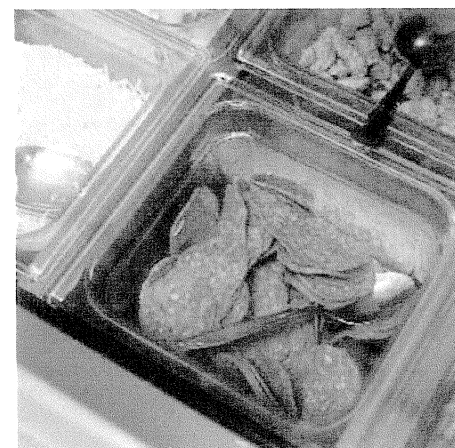
JAMIE GERMANO staff photographer

Mackenzie Malia, 15, of Fairport, and Jordan White, 16, of Webster, created Garnished Infusion to teach their peers how to cook healthfully. The lessons are offered at Make & Take Gourmet in Webster.



Mackenzie and Jordan's classes will focus on teaching teens different ways of cooking while stressing healthful eating habits.

(JAMIE GERMANO staff photographer)



JAMIE GERMANO staff photographer

At Make & Take Gourmet, work stations, such as this calzone station, are

futures through their experience with YEA.

"The things we learned in the class can help us with anything we do later in life," said Mackenzie.

"Some of the speakers were amazing, and the field trips we took — we learned how the whole business world works."

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set up with different recipes and necessary ingredients.

YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS ACADEMY

To become a member of the Young Entrepreneurs Academy, prospective students must go through an application process. It includes submitting a student transcript, writing an essay, providing a letter of recommendation and undergoing a personal interview. There are a limited number of scholarships available.

An informational session will be held at 6 p.m. April 24 in Wilson Commons on the University of Rochester campus. Space is limited; call (585) 275-6902.

Additional information on YEA is available at (585) 275-6902. The e-mail address is osp@rochester.edu.

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NativeRochestarian wrote:

Couldn't agree more, Ogre. Sounds like a very promising venture! Glad to see our kids taking the initiative when recognize there is a problem. Good luck! :-)

4/8/2008 8:16:24 AM

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CreativeOgre wrote:

It is good to see these two giving it their best shot, and wish them success in the venture. It does make one wonder what happened to the good old "Home Economics class" back in High school's.... Just another example of how the school systems have cut education in fields that they deem "not necessary", but in the long term, provide basic skills in life.

4/8/2008 4:23:42 AM

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