

Junior Achievement program coming to Bancroft



By Nate Smelle

Junior Achievement's program manager Jenn Miles was at the North Hastings high school on Oct. 16 recruiting for their upcoming Company Program to be held in Bancroft later this fall. The program begins in mid-November and runs for 18 weeks. It is designed to inspire high school students to create an enterprise of their own. During this time the students work with mentors from the community who helped them develop their own product, brand, and the marketing and sales strategy.

"It gives them a sense, and hopefully a new respect for small business in the community," says Miles.

"It also gives them an understanding of all the hats that small business proprietors have to wear. For example, Internet marketing and advertising, sales campaigns, IT, productions, human resources. It gives them a good overall understanding."

Miles says the students will sell their product, as well as shares to their company to help them raise venture capital to cover the costs of their operation. At the end of the program the budding young entrepreneurs will hold a liquidation sale to sell off their leftover inventory. They will then use the money to pay out dividends to their shareholders, with the remaining profits being split among students. By showing young entrepreneurs how business works the program inspires them to ask questions about what their own future might look like.

"It gives them a chance to investigate their own interests and it empowers them to go after their goals," Miles explained.

"If you've got youth that are questioning what the next step is, or if they want to be their own boss, if they want to become a mechanic, if they want to fix iPhones, if they want to run a dog walking service or kennel, this is a great program for them to try that hat on."

The program gives participants a complete understanding of what it takes and what they need to understand before they start their own business. Miles said the program helps them discover their find strengths and understand their weaknesses. If for example they don't like math, they find out quickly that if they want to be their own boss they either have to hire an accountant, find a partner or someone else who can help them.

"It teaches them how to work together to accomplish at goal," she said.

"As a youth enterprise program the economic development side of it is that we are trying to up-skill youth to recognize what is going on in their communities. To recognize that there are a lot of niches and that there can be some innovation. From an economic development perspective what we are trying to do here is to ignite entrepreneurship. We want to ignite that idea that you can be your own boss even if you are 17."

Already with enough youth registered in Bancroft to run two groups, Junior Achievement is currently looking mentors from the business community in the Bancroft area. To get involved or for more information on the program contact Jenn Miles at jmiles@ja-plm.ca or visit www.ja-plm.ca.